Four Discourses

Delivered to the

CLERGY

OF THE

Diocels of Sarum,

CONCERNING

I. The Truth of the Christian Religion.
II. The Divinity and Death of Christ.
III. The Infallibility and Authority of the Church.
IV. The Obligations to continue in the Communion of the Church.

By the Right Reverend Father in God,
GILBERT, Lord Bishop of SARUM.

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JO. CANT.

TO THE CLERGY OF THE Dioceſs of Sarum.

My Reverend and dear Brethren,

THESE *Diſcourſes were at firſt prepared for you, and were delivered to you among a great many more on other Subjects on ſeveral occaſions: they were ſo well received by you, that many of you deſired that you might have them copied out for a more laſting uſe. This has ſet me on publiſhing theſe that follow, they relating to Four different ſort of men with whom you may be engaged.*

The firſt is againſt Atheiſts *and* Libertines, *who grow to be ſo bold and inſolent, that it is of the laſt importance, that you ſhould be well furniſh'd with Anſwers to thoſe Objections with which they make the greateſt noiſe. This is the Peſt of the Age we live in, the moſt dangerous as well as the moſt contagious of all others: It ſtrikes at all, and corrupts the whole Man, as well as it diſſolves all the bounds of Nature and Society. This promiſes ſuch an Indemnity, and gives ſo entire a liberty, that depraved Inclinations and Affections will be always of its ſide; and it has ſome ſpecious things to alledge, the Novelty and Boldneſs of which, makes them paſs for Wit and Good Humour, which will be always taking to thoſe who want and deſire ſupports and excuſes for ſins. Upon all theſe accounts, and chiefly upon the fatal progreſs which this Blaſphemous Spirit of Infidelity has made among us, it becomes us to conſider theſe matters well, that we may be throughly acquainted with all thoſe depths of* Satan, *and know what to anſwer to all thoſe falſe ſhews of Wit or Reaſon, as well as to the more petulant demands by which that prophane* Crew *ſtudy to undermine and beat down all Religion.*

One of their common Topicks, *is the decrying all* Myſteries; *and in this they fall in to the ſame oppoſition with the* Socinians, *tho upon very different deſigns. For the* Socinians *run down all* Myſteries, *and think they can make it appear, That thoſe paſſages of Scripture by which they are commonly proved, have another meaning; whereas* Libertines *do it, being perſuaded that they are indeed contained in the Scriptures; and therefore they hope that they will gain their main end of decrying all Revealed* Religion, *if ſtrong prejudices are once formed againſt Myſteries; and yet they are at the ſame time conſider'd as parts of the Chriſtian*

ſtian Religion, and are believed to be contain'd in the Scriptures. I muſt alſo do this right to the Socinians, as to own that their Rules and Morality are exact and ſevere; that they are generally men of Probity, Juſtice and Charity, and ſeem to be very much in earneſt in preſſing the obligations to very high degrees of Virtue. Yet their denying all ſecret Aſſiſtances, muſt cut off the Exerciſes of many Devotions, that give a ſoftneſs and tenderneſs to the mind; which if once extinguiſh'd, it muſt of neceſſity draw after it a dry flatneſs over all a man's thoughts and powers; their denying the certainty of God's foreſeeing all future events that depend upon the freedom of a man's Will, muſt very much weaken our Confidence in God, our patience under all misfortunes, and our expectations of [illegible]verance in due time. Their Notions of another ſtate, do alſo take off much of the ter[illegible]under which Bad men ought to be kept, and leſſen the Joys of Good men; On all theſe accounts, their Opinions ſeem to have a great Influence upon practice; but with relation to the great Article of Chriſtianity concerning the Perſon and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, their Doctrine gives ſo different a view of this Religion in its moſt important Head, that either we have been guilty of a moſt Irreligious prophanation, in eſteeming one to be God, and giving him all the Acknowledgments and Adorations that belong to the Great and Eternal God, who yet is a meer Creature; or they muſt be no leſs guilty, who if he be the Great and the True God, do look on him only as a Creature, and yet offer him all divine Honour and Worſhip: and if his Death was only a pattern, or any thing elſe than a true propitiatory Sacrifice, then we who look on it as our Propitiation and Redemption, who claim and truſt to it, as our Ranſom and Atonement, do very impiouſly raiſe its value beyond the Truth, and fix our Confidence, with relation to our Peace with God, upon a falſe foundation. Whereas on the other hand, If God has ſet forth his death as a Propitiation for the forgiveneſs of ſin, then they are guilty of black Ingratitude, and of defeating the chief deſign of the Goſpel, who ſo far detract from its value, as to reckon it only a patern of dying, a confirmation of the Goſpel, and neceſſary preliminary to a Reſurrection. Upon all theſe accounts it is that I could never underſtand the Pacificatory Doctrines of thoſe who think that theſe are queſtions in which a diverſity of Opinions may well be endured without diſturbing the Peace of the Church, or breaking Communion about them. They ſeem to be the Fundamentals of Chriſtianity, and therefore I thought it was very neceſſary for me to give you a full and clear Inſtruction in this matter.

The 3d. Diſcourſe relates to that upon which the whole Cauſe of Popery turns; for if they are Infallible, it is to no purpoſe to diſpute about any thing elſe: and if they are fallible, their pretending to Infallibility, is of it ſelf a juſt prejudice againſt their whole Church, and againſt all their other Doctrines, when they claim to ſo high an authority without good grounds. Since therefore this is the moſt Important part of all our Controverſies with that Church, and ſince it is that to which they always turn themſelves, by which they gain Proſelites, and eſtabliſh their own Votaries, and ſet them out of the reach of all Conviction; the underſtanding of this matter in its full extent, ſeems to be a very neceſſary piece of ſtudy. We are apt upon a little Interval of quiet to forget the practices of that Church; and becauſe we do not think of them, we may be apt to fancy that they think as little of us: but they do ſtill purſue their point with an unwearied diligence. They never give over, but when one deſign fails, they either ſtudy to retrieve it, or to ſet another on foot, with an Induſtry that ought to awaken us, and keep us always on our guard. The Numbers of their Emiſſaries are great and their Zeal is ever warm and active; therefore we muſt never loſe ſight of them; and above all the other points of Controverſy, we muſt ſtudy to be moſt particularly converſant in this, and expert at the management of it.

The Fourth Diſcourſe relates to the various Bodies of the Diſſenters among us, and all the different grounds upon which they ſeparate from us. The Toleration that the Law gives them, does not alter the nature of things, nor make an unjuſt Separation to be one whit the lawfuller than it was when they were under a ſevere Yoke. The Law only gives a Civil Impunity, and does not puniſh: But the Cauſe of the Separation is the ſame that it was, and is neither better nor worſe, whether the Separation is puniſhed or not. They are now left to themſelves, and are ſo much the freer in their choice, the leſs reſtraint is put upon them. Therefore it was never more ſeaſonable than it is now, to ſet the whole matter in a true light

before all that may be concerned in it, that they may weigh it the more impartially: And the leſs uneaſy we ſeem to be, at the eaſe which the Law gives them, we may have thereby the greater advantages in endeavouring to bring them back to the Communion of the Church, by ſhewing both their obligations to it, and the weakneſs of thoſe Reaſons which have led them to depart from it.

I think it is not neceſſary to ſay more, for juſtifying the choice that I have made of theſe four Heads, as the firſt Eſſay that I offer you, of a great many other Diſcouſes, with which I have entertained you, when I have deſired you to meet in the ſeveral parts and different Diviſions of my Dioceſs: Some head of Divinity being propoſed as the Subject of a Conference, I have enlarged upon a great many among you, and have laid before you all that my Studies and Obſervation could ſuggeſt; and after that, have led you to diſcourſe freely upon it. This has ſeemed to me a proper method for awakening your Enquiries, and for encreaſing your Knowledge: And thoſe meetings have been ſo well kept by you, and the Diſcourſes ſo carefully attended to, that it has given me no ſmall encouragement to go on ſtill in the ſame method. And as your thinking that you have profited by my Labours, is a full and rich recompence, that does abundantly overbalance any pains they may put me to: So it is for your ſake that I do now publiſh theſe Diſcourſes; and as they prove acceptable or uſeful to you, I may, perhaps, publiſh others hereafter.

Certainly, next to a true ſenſe of Divine Matters, and the inward belief and impreſſions of Religion, Study, and a deſire of uſeful knowledge, is that which becomes our Profeſſion the beſt. It is that which enables us both to underſtand our buſineſs, and to do our duty. It is the nobleſt entertainment, and the beſt preſervative from idleneſs, and from all that dulneſs and wearineſs, all thoſe exceſſes and diſorders that ariſe out of it. The mind will be always working, and if we do not let it fly at nobler game, it will either ſink into a feebleneſs and ſtupidity, or look out for ſuch Diverſions as do offer themſelves, without a ſcrupulous regard to their unſuitableneſs to our Character. Theſe draw men down to a vicious familiarity with bad men, and do fatally engage many to ſhare with them in bad practices: either they make us much the worſe, or at the leaſt we ſeem to be ſo to others, when we throw away much of our time in levities, which do often end in groſs Immoralities. In which the World will be apt to give us a large ſhare, often without a pretence, but to be ſure, if there is the leaſt ſhadow for it, the chief part of the blame will be caſt on us. Nor will it be eaſy for us to be blameleſs, *and* without rebuke, *unleſs we maintain the other part of the Character given by St.* Paul, *that as* becomes the ſons of God, We ſhine as lights in the world. *And I may well conclude, That a ſerious application to ſtudy, is the beſt fence, both of the Probity, and of the Reputation of a Clergy-man: It both teaches himſelf all the parts of his duty, and creates to him that eſteem which is neceſſary to ſupport him in the diſcharge of it.*

And therefore, my dear Brethren, I do with all poſſible Earneſtneſs call upon you, to ſtudy to maintain the high Reputation for Learning, of which the Clergy of this Church has been ſo long poſſeſſed; and to give your ſelves time and leiſure to peruſe and digeſt the Learned Productions of thoſe Great Men among us; and not to be proud, or to boaſt that we belong to a Body that has produced Men ſo deſervedly admired, both by Friends and Enemies, while we our ſelves are ſo little like them, that we are not a whit the wiſer or the learneder for all that they have left us. Some hours every day well placed would ſoon bring us under ſuch habits, that it would not be eaſy, if poſſible, for us to live out of all commerce with Learning, and the learned World. I know the unhappy ſtate of many depauperated Benefices, puts it out of the Incumbent's power to furniſh themſelves with Books; as much as their narrow Circumſtances indiſpoſe them for making uſe of them, if they had them. This is a N. 5
crying grievance, and looks too like a ſcorn put on the Goſpel, when thoſe who Miniſter in ſpiritual things are ſo ſlenderly ſupplied in Temporals, that nothing but extreme Neceſſity can induce Men to ſerve in ſuch Cures, who are put to wreſtle ſtill with the ſame neceſſity, eſpecially if they have Families that grow upon them. But as we have at preſent juſt Grounds to hope, and to give you cauſe likewiſe to hope, that if God bleſſes us with calm and ſetled times, effectual Remedies ſhould be found out to that great miſery, under which

many of you languish, which must needs give very sad and afflicting thoughts to those who observe it, and who ought to watch over you, and to take care of you; so the best method to move our Princes, *and to dispose the Nation to take pity on you, is for you to* take heed to your selves, and to the Flocks *that are committed to you; to follow your Studies and your Labours more diligently, and to raise your own Character by your Exemplary Lives, and the painful discharge of your Duties. This, and this only, will draw down the blessings of Heaven upon your Persons, and your Labours; this will make your very Enemies to be at Peace with you, and will force those who do now despise you, to esteem you, and to count you worthy of* double Honour, *of a larger and easier subsistence.*

I will employ the rest of this Discourse in pressing upon you one great part of your duty, in which, as I am glad that so many among you set a good Example to their Brethren, so I do earnestly wish that all the rest may follow it: It is, To express an affectionate and hearty zeal for their Majesties, *and their* Government; *and to endeavour to keep your People always in mind of the extream Miseries, as well as of the visible Dangers of* Popery *and* Tyranny. *This must still be remembred as a lasting honour to this* Church, *That some years ago, there was in a day of Trial, so noble an* Opposition *given to that* Religion, *and the steps that were then made to bring it in upon us. We are still in the struggle, and are strangely mistaken, if we imagine the Danger is past. We plainly see the* Clouds *return after the* Rain; *and a Relapse into that State would make the latter end much worse than the beginning: The Hope which then supported, and afterwards delivered us, would no more soften our Miseries with the prospect of better Times. The Rage, as well as the Power of our Enemies, would be much encreased; and there is no doubt to be made, but that those who have no* Religion, *whose numbers, God knows, do swell vastly, would hope to atone for all that has been done with the change of their No-Religion, for that to which their Interest should lead them. And if ever God, for our great and crying Sins, is provoked to visit us in so terrible a manner; we, who have been hitherto the most favoured of all the* Churches *of God, must become the most miserable. Whither can we fly for shelter, or where can we promise our selves either Retreat or Relief?*

The prospect of such a Calamity seems to be one of the blackest of all that has been since the World begun; and yet how tamely do many look for it; while others with a fury that is as much without bounds, as it is without sense, are endeavouring to bring on that Evil Day; *to make the Nation grow weary of its Delivrance and present Quiet, and return back into* Egypt. *While they spread so many False Reports, with a Spite that is as restless as it is insolent; shall we at such a time stand as neutral, and unconcerned, while all is at stake? Shall it be said, That whereas some years ago, during the Debates concerning the* Exclusion, *we sided so openly, and with a Zeal that shewed it self on all occasions, and in Instances which were better forgotten than remembred; yet now when all that can concern us, either as we are Men, and* Englishmen, *or as we are Christians, and the Ministers of the* Church *of* England, *is in such eminent danger, we seem to let all Parties fight it out the best they can, while we only do what is enjoined, and express neither affection nor zeal.*

I will not offer to say any thing to convince you of the Lawfulness of the present Constitution: For I cannot admit so bad a thought of any of you, as to imagine that you could take the Oaths, and continue to perform Divine Offices, *Ordinary and Extraordinary, unless you were fully satisfied in your* Consciences *concerning the Lawfulness both of the one and of the other. This is so black an Imputation, to suppose that Men of common Probity, not to say, Men that ought to be the Paterns, as well as the Instructers of others, should swear an Oath and adhere so long to it, which is an interpretative renewing of it, ever till it is openly retracted, and should in those frequent returns of daily Prayers, besides the special Offices of* Fasts *and* Thanksgiving-days, *offer up Devotions to God contrary to their Persuasions, that no man is capable of so heinous, and so continued a Prevarication, unless he is either a determinate Atheist, or a man of a seared and hardned Conscience. Now as this is of so odious a nature, that indeed it is not easy to find words severe enough to set it out by; so supposing men once convinced of the Lawfulness of our present Scituation, it is very extraordi-*

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nary if they are cold and unconcerned in a Point, which when it is once yielded to be lawful, is unqueſtionably of the greateſt importance and conſequence poſſible.

If Liberty and Religion are valuable things; and if they are not, what is valuable? If the maintaining the Purity of the Chriſtian Religion, free from Idolatry and Superſtition, from Impoſture and Cruelty; if the maintaining a Church that without partiality, is to be preferred to any Church now in the World; and if the keeping out of a Religion, which is without partiality the worſt of any that carries the Name of Chriſt; If the preſerving a Government that is juſt and mild, that is guided by Law, and that maintains Property, and that leaves Mankind to all the Liberties of a free-born Nature, and of a well Conſtituted Society: And if the withſtanding an abſolute and Deſpotical, an Arbitrary and Violent Tyranny, that tramples on all things Sacred and Human, that oppreſſes Liberty, and deſtroys Property, and that makes men Slaves, and treats them as brute Beaſts; If, I ſay, all theſe things are well weighed, then we muſt conclude, That we owe the utmoſt degrees of affection and zeal to Their Majeſties, and to Their Government: We ought to make all our People ſenſible, both of the Happineſs that we do now enjoy, and of the Miſeries that we are preſerved from, by Their means, and under Their Protection. We ought to ſet Popery and Slavery before them in their true Colours, with all the light and life that we can give them: We ought to ſet our ſelves againſt thoſe falſe Brethren, that pretend they are of the Church of *England, but are not; and are of* the Synagogue of Satan, *which in its ſtrict notion ſignifying an* Adverſary, *we may without any breach of Charity affirm, that they aſſociate themſelves to the Enemy of our Nation, and of our Religion; whoſe Perſon, Government, Forces and Succeſſes, they are always magnifying, on deſign to intimidate ſuch as can be wrought on by their falſe Surmiſes. Theſe things we ought to repreſs and oppoſe on all occaſions with the Spirit and Courage that ſuch matter require.*

It is Stupidity and not Patience to be cold and luke-warm, while England *and the Proteſtant Religion are in the laſt ſtruggles whether they muſt live or die. If God does not bleſs ſo good a Cauſe in all the ſteps it makes, with the Succeſs that we ought to deſire and pray for; we ſhould teach our people not to murmur, nor aggravate matters, not to ſink or deſpond, but to conſider how much our ſins have provoked God's Wrath, how ſmall a ſhare we bear of thoſe devouring* Calamities *that have ruin'd ſo great a part of* Europe; *while we only bear the* Charge, *but feel few of the Miſeries of War. If ſome years are leſs proſperous than others have been, we ought to reflect on former Succeſſes, and the ill uſe that we have made of them, which may have provoked God to change his methods: and yet take all together, it muſt be acknowledged, that we have had of late more publick Bleſſings and fewer Misfortunes, than any Nation under Heaven. Can one reflect on the Blaſphemy and Infidelity, the diſſolution of all good Morals, and the Impieties and Vices of all ſorts that are among us, and not wonder rather, that we have not been made a ſcene of Earthquakes and Ruins, as* Sicily, Malta *and* Jamaica *have of late been? It is to theſe ſins that we ought to turn the minds of our people, when they are at any time dejected with ill ſucceſs; we ought to call upon them to repent of, and to reform their ways: and when that is done, or even ſet about, we may then hope that God will change his methods towards us; and continue his Goſpel among us, together with the Bleſſings of a Juſt and Wiſe Government, and of Peace and Plenty.*

Theſe are Subjects on which we ought to dwell much, and Preach often. But that I may not diſmiſs this matter, without any thing that looks like an Argument; I will open to you two great Precedents, which you have often heard me enlarge on with much ſeeming ſatisfaction: and becauſe you have thought that I laid them out in a more particular manner, than you had otherwiſe met with them; I will now ſpread them out before you: and that the rather, becauſe Arguments from Examples, and authoriſed practices, have upon many Accounts a ſtronger Influence, than general reaſonings. Matters of Fact are eaſier apprehended, and more capable of full proof, than points of ſpeculation; which do more eaſily bend to any turn, that a Man of Wit may give them, than meer Facts, which are ſtubborn and ſullen.

The firſt of theſe is taken from the Hiſtory of the Maccabees, *which I deſire you will con-*

ſider by theſe ſteps. That the Jews *became the Subjects of the Kings of* Babylon *by the Entire Conqueſt which* Nebuchadnezzar *made of that Nation; that after the end of 70 Years, they continu'd to be ſubject to* Cyrus, *who tho he ſent them back to rebuild their Temple, and tho his Succeſſors ſuffer'd them both to finiſh that, and to rebuild and encloſe* Jeruſalem, *yet they continu'd ſtill to be the Subjects of the Kings of* Perſia; *this was transferred to* Alexander *the* Great, *when he conquer'd that Empire: And finally, they fell to the ſhare of the Kings of* Syria, *and were their Subjects above* 140 *Years. They proved hard Maſters to them:* Antiochus Epiphanes *robb'd the Temple in the* 143 *Year of the* Seleucida; *a great Maſſacre*
1 Macc. 1. *followed; but theſe were particular Acts of Tyranny; and ſo tho there was great mourning*
20, 24, 25. *upon this, yet it was ſubmitted to: For certainly the Peace of Mankind, and the Order of the World require, that ſpecial acts of malverſation, and even of Tyranny, ſhould be born, rather than that we ſhould ſhake an eſtabliſhed Conſtitution: But in the year* 145. *he went on to a total Subverſion of their Religion, by an Edict which required that they ſhould*
V. 41. forſake their Law, and become one People *with him: In purſuance of which, the Altar at*
V. 54. Jeruſalem *was defiled; Idolatrous Altars were ſet up in all their Cities, and every Man was*
V. 57. *to be put to Death that ſtill adhered to the Law of* Moſes. *Here then were Subjects brought under a general Sentence of Death, unleſs they ſhould depart from the Laws of God: ſpecial Oppreſſions and violent Acts of Cruelty were ſubmitted to; but when they ſaw themſelves involved all in the ſame common fate, they defended themſelves.*

Mattathias *not only refuſed to join in the Idolatry that they had ſet up, but killed both him that went to offer the Sacrifice and likewiſe the King's Commiſſioner; upon which the*
2 ch. 24, 25. *Hiſtorian adds this Reflection,* Thus dealt he zealouſly for the Law of God, like *Phinehas;*
V. 26. *he animated his Children to follow his Example, and to truſt in God; but he vouched no immediate warrant that he had from God: He charged his Children* to be zealous for the Law, and to give their Lives for the Covenant of their Fathers; to be valiant, and to ſhew themV. 50. ſelves Men in behalf of it, for by it you ſhall obtain glory; *and he ordered them to take*
V. 64. *unto them all that* obſerved the Law, and to revenge the wrong of their People; to Re-
V. 67, 68. compence fully the *Heathen,* and to take heed to the Commandment of the Law. *Upon this followed the Wars of the* Maccabees, *in which they never pretended to any ſpecial Authority from any Prophet: On the contrary, their Hiſtory tells us, That they laid up the*
4 Macc. 46. *Stones of the Altar, that had been prophaned by Idolatry, in* a convenient place, till a Prophet ſhould come to ſhew what ſhould be done with them. *Thus then we ſee Subjects defend themſelves againſt their Prince, when he deſigned a total Subverſion of their Religion: and for this they vouched no immediate nor extraordinary Authority.*

But to give this Argument its entire force, We muſt next ſee upon what reaſon we may conclude, that this was a juſtifiable, and by conſequence an imitable Action. As for this, tho I think it is ſcarce neceſſary to enlarge much on an Apology for the Maccabees, *their*
11 Dan. 31, *Wars having born ſuch a venerable ſound in a courſe of ſo many Ages; yet to purſue the*
32, 33, 34. *matter fully, we find a Propheſy concerning them in* Daniel, *which is by all Commentators Ancient and Modern, applied to them, that alone ſeems to import a full Juſtification of them; after mention is made of a King that ſhould* defile the Sanctuary, and take away the daily Sacrifice, and ſet upon it the abomination that maketh deſolate; *to that, this is added, and* ſuch as do wickedly againſt the Covenant, ſhall he corrupt by flatteries: but the People that do know their God, ſhall be ſtrong, and do exploits. And they that underſtand among the People, ſhall inſtruct many; yet they ſhall fall by the Sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by ſpoil many days: And when they ſhall fall, they ſhall be holpen with a little help; but many ſhall cleave to them with flatteries. *As theſe words import a plain Prediction, in terms of approbation of the Wars of the* Maccabees, *ſo all the Commentators that I have yet ſeen, without exception, do apply them to them*

There are alſo many Commentators who do apply likewiſe to them, thoſe words of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, Who out of weakneſs were made ſtrong, waxed valiant in fight, and
11 Heb. 34. turned to flight the Armies of the Aliens: *And there is a particular reſemblance obſerved between theſe words, and ſome Phraſes that occur in the Books of the* Maccabees: *Yet I confeſs theſe words are not ſo expreſs as the former, nor are they ſo Univerſally expounded in*

this sense. But to conclude this matter, The Authority of those Books, as it is an Argument of full force against those who acknowledge them to be Canonical; so since by the Articles of our Church, these Books are to be read for example of Life, and for the Instruction of manners; tho it doth not apply them to establish any Doctrine; and since we read so many Lessons taken out of the Apocrypha: These must be acknowledged to be Books of great, tho not of Divine Authority. And tho according to the Article of our Church, the arguing from any one passage in them is not to be allowed; yet if Subjects standing on their own defence, in the case of a total Subversion, is to be esteemed Rebellion, then we bind up with our Bibles, and recommend to our People, two Books that set out a History with great pomp, and with an Air of much Piety, which was no other than a down right Rebellion. Art. 6.

To this, the only answer that I have ever yet seen made, is, That the Jewish Dispensation being founded on Temporal Promises, whereas the Christian Religion is a Doctrine of the Cross, things of this kind might have been Lawful among them, tho they are not so to us: and that the rather, because by a Practice that was authorised, from the Example of Phinehas, and the praise given him for it, private Men might among the Jews, when the Magistrate was remiss, fall upon Offenders, and punish them, especially in the case of Idolatry. This is all that seems to be offered with any colour of Reason, to take off the Argument from the practice of the Maccabees: and therefore the considering and stating it aright, will determine the whole matter. First, then, The true arguments against Resistance being drawn from the Magistrates having the Sword from God, together with all the Topicks that belong to that head, they are equally obligatory to all Nations, and all Religions; it being no part of any special Doctrine delivered in the New Testament, but arising from the Attributes of God, and the Peace and Order of the World, which did bind Jews as well as Christians: tho there are indeed Specialties in the Christian Religion, that do enforce this the more, and aggravate the transgression of it more apparently. So that if Subjects defending themselves in the case of a Total Subversion, (it must ever be remembred, that I am now only arguing upon this Supposition) is the sin of Rebellion, it was a sin to the Jews, to the Maccabees in particular, as well as it is a sin to Christians. As for that of the Zealots, tho at first appearance it seems to be of some force, yet when examined it will be found to have very little in it. If we consider the first Authorities for Zealots, we shall find, that the Jews stretched this matter beyond all bounds; so that to their mistakes about it, they owed a great part of their last fatal Miseries, which ended in their ruin. This matter has been also too implicitly taken by many Christian Writers from them. The first beginning of Zealotism was in the Instance of Phinehas his killing Zimri and Cosbi; but before this was done, Moses, who was the chief Ruler, did command all the Judges of Israel, that every one should slay his men that were joined to Baal-Peor. Phinehas was one of these Judges; for as Eleazar had been set over the Tribe of Levi when his Father was High-Priest, so Aaron being dead at this time, and Eleazar made High-Priest in his stead, Phinehas was now over the Tribe of Levi; and thus Moses Command was in particular directed to him; therefore though the Zeal with which he executed it, was highly acceptable to God, yet it was exactly Regular, since Moses had given a general Order for it. 25 Num. 5. 3 Num. 32. 20 Num. 28.

After this followed some Instances of Men eminently authorized by God, by the Gifts of Prophecy and Miracles, who did in some Cases punish Idolaters; such was Samuel's hewing Agag in pieces, in execution of the Divine Command; and Elijah's ordering all the Priests of Baal to be killed, after he had by an astonishing Miracle proved that Jehovah was the true God, and that he was his Prophet. This was suitable to their Dispensation, which being a Theocracy, an authorized Prophet might well have entred upon the Functions of the Magistrate, when the King himself was in fault, and the Law was openly profaned. Upon the same grounds our Saviour, after his Miracles had openly declared that he was sent of God, did whip the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, when they had profaned the Court of the Gentiles, and had made that House of Prayer a Den of Thieves. 1 Sam. 15. 33. 1 Kings 18. 40. 21 Mat. 13.

Thus it is plain, That none of the Presidents from the Zealots of the Old Testament, could justify private Men, such as Mattathias and his Children, to do any thing that was of it self irregular and unlawful. Phinehas his practice was a Precedent for acting in the matters of their

their Law with much ſpirit and courage, but it could not juſtify any man who ſhould preſume to do that, which was not otherwiſe lawful for him to do; and though the Spirit of the
9 Luke 55, 56. Chriſtian Religion is very different from the Spirit by which Elijah and other Prophets under the Old Teſtament were acted; as our Saviour told his Diſciples, particularly in this, that whereas in the one, Prophets did immediately by Miracles, or otherwiſe, puniſh ſome Offenders; in the other, all was to be managed with a Spirit of Gentleneſs and Charity; yet after all, the laſting Rules of Morality and Human Society, were the ſame then that they are now.

This Inſtance, I think, does fully juſtify thoſe who, ſeeing a total Subverſion of our Religion ſo far advanced, that the Pope's Authority was publickly owned, and that all the Laws that ſecured it, were declared to be under a Diſpenſing Power, which was in it ſelf a total Subverſion of our Conſtitution, did think it lawful to accept of a Deliverance, to concur in it, and to aſſiſt towards it.

2. The other Inſtance is taken from the firſt beginnings of Chriſtianity's being the Legal and Authoriſed Religion of the Roman Empire; and from the firſt Council that is eſteemed General, where a Precedent is laid down, that is, no leſs full for juſtifying thoſe who tho they did not concur in procuring our Deliverance, yet have ſince cloſed in it, with all humble Gratitude and Obedience to thoſe whom God made the Inſtruments in ſo great a Work.

After Conſtantine and Licinius had given out theſe Edicts at Milan, by which the Chriſtians had full liberty both for their Belief and Worſhip, and had all the Rights and Immunities of other Corporations granted them, Licinius being ſtill in his heart an Enemy to that Religion, began in the Year 319, to perſecute the Chriſtians: He durſt not, for fear of Conſtantine, fall upon them openly; but his Intentions being well underſtood by his Miniſters, the Governours of the Provinces committed in many places great Cruelties. He likewiſe turned the Chriſtians firſt out of his Houſhold, and next out of all his Armies. He made a Law againſt relieving ſuch as were in Priſon, by which thoſe who relieved them were to be puniſhed as Complices of their Crimes. He apprehending that moſt of the Biſhops wiſht well to Conſtantine, and that in their hearts they were ſet againſt himſelf, went on by degrees in his deſign againſt them, he by one Edict forbade the Biſhops to meet together, or to meddle with the Concerns of one another's Churches. By another, he deſigned to expoſe them to Scandal and Scorn. He forbade Men and Women to meet together to worſhip God, or Biſhops to viſit Women; or Women to come to be inſtructed in their Schools; and appointed that Women only ſhould inſtruct Women. He alſo forbade their holding Aſſemblies within Cities, and ordered them to meet in the open Fields. Some Churches were pulled down by his Orders, and others were ſhut up; and his firſt Succeſſes made him reſolve on a general Perſecution: For not only Euſebius, but both Socrates, Sozemen, and ſeveral other Writers, do all affirm, That there was no general Perſecution begun, but that there were viſible ſteps made towards it. When all this was repreſented to Conſtantine, he was much affected with it; and reſolved to help the oppreſſed, and thought it was a pious and holy Action to ſave a multitude, by the deſtroying of one Perſon: for he ſaw no other way was left to relieve the Oppreſſed; and his engaging in a War with Licinius, was by the Biſhops of the Eaſt, that is, Licinius's own Subjects, aſcribed to an immediate Conduct and Providence of God. It is true, Eutropius puts this upon Conſtantine's Ambition, and his aſpiring to be the ſingle Monarch of the World: This is alſo inſinuated by Aurelius Victor, and more fully ſet out by Zoſimus; whoſe hatred both of Conſtantine, and of the Chriſtian Religion, breaks out into ſo many Partialities, unbecoming an Hiſtorian, and engages him into ſo many Stories that are evidently falſe, that little regard is due to any thing he ſays.

Euſ. Chron. Theoph. Anonim. Valeſ. Euſ. l. 10. c. 8.

Euſ. de Vit. Con. l. 1. c. 5. c 53.

Euſ. l. 10. c. 8. De vit. Con. l. 2. c. 2. cap. 3.

Εὐσεβὲς ἦν ὅσιον.

Euſ. l. 10. c. 8.

Lib. 10. Principatum totius Orbis affectans.

I will not enlarge upon the War that followed; only I muſt obſerve, that tho Conſtantine as the Senior Emperour, had the precedence of Licinius; yet he had no ſort of Authority over him: So here two Princes, both equally Sovereigns of the Roman Empire, Colleagues and Brothers-in-Law, for Licinius had maried Conſtantine's Siſter, were engaged in a War: the quarrel was not a general perſecution; but ſuch ſteps made, as did plainly diſcover there was one intended. A Peace ſoon after followed. The Cement of it was, The declaring Licinius's Son Licinian Ceſar, who was then 21 years of Age; this put him in the Succeſſion.

but a ſecond Rupture followed quickly after that. Licinius's hatred to the Chriſtians being rather encreaſed than abated, ſince he obſerved that they all loved Conſtantine; This proved fatal to Licinius, for he was totally defeated at Andrianople the 3d. of July 324. and after ſome fruitleſs Attempts, he was forced to put himſelf in Conſtantines hand, on the 18th. of September following. Whereupon he was ſent to live a private man at Theſſalonica: but Conſtantine underſtanding that he could not reſt, ordered him to be put to death, in the beginning of the Year 325. Now we are in the next place to ſee what was the ſenſe of the whole Church, of this Tranſaction: I confeſs we ought not to take it ſingly from Euſebius, for he is rather a perpetual Encomiaſt of Conſtantine, than his Hiſtorian, but we have a much more certain and Authentical Authority for this: Conſtantine in the ſame year in which he had put Licinius to death, and had taken no notice of Lucinian, tho but a year before made Cæſar by his own Act, called the firſt General Council to meet at Nice: For in his Speech to them, he tells them, that he had given Orders to call them together, as ſoon as he had overcome the Tyranny. The Council made no Exceptions to Conſtantine as an Invader; they did neither enquire after Lucinian, nor complain of Licinius's fate: On the contrary, when Conſtantine came in and harangued them, Euſtathius of Antioch did entertain him with a Panegyrick, full of high Commendations; and another ſeems to have been made by Euſebius, bleſſing Almighty God upon his account; which Speeches pronounced in full Council, are at leaſt a ſtrong Preſumption, that they all approved of the War, and rejoiced in the deliverance. This is yet more evident from the 11th. Canon of the Council, in which they reflect upon the late Tyranny of Licinius, which ſhews that tho his death, and the ruin of his Family, muſt have naturally given ſome Compaſſion for one that was then ſcarce cold, and that had ſo lately been their Prince: for almoſt that whole Council conſiſted of thoſe who had been the Biſhops in his ſhare of the Empire; yet they conſidered the danger they and their Religion had been in under him, and their deliverance by Conſtantine, as vaſtly ſuperiour to their Ties to him; ſo that there was an Univerſal Joy over the whole Eaſt upon the Succeſſes of Conſtantine.

Euſ. Vit. Conſt. *l.* 3 *c.* 12.

Theod. *l.* 7 De Vit. Conſt. *l.* 3 *c.* 11.

The having adhered to Licinius, and taking part with him in the War, tho he was then actually their Prince, was a matter of ſuch Scandal and Infamy, that Conſtantine in a Letter which he writ to the Nicomedians againſt Enſebius their Biſhop, reproaches him with this, 'That he had been always in Licinius's Councils and Secrets, that he had all along 'ſtuck to him, and had treated himſelf with Reproach; that he had imployed Spies to pro-'cure Intelligence to Licinius, and that he had given him all ſort of Aſſiſtance, except the 'bearing of Armes for him: all which Conſtantine affirms he is ready to prove, by ſome 'Prieſt and Deacons who had adher'd to Euſebius, and whom he had taken Priſoners. And thus we ſee what the ſenſe of the whole Church in one of its beſt Ages, and of the firſt General Council, was of a Deliverance procured by one Sovereign Prince's attacking, dethroning, and poſſeſſing himſelf of the Empire of another, who had not yet ſet on foot a General Perſecution, but had only violated the Laws, which the Chriſtians had for the ſecurity of their Religion, had committed many Acts of Injuſtice and violence againſt them; and had declared his Intentions ſo viſibly, that there was all poſſible reaſon to conclude that a General Perſecution was coming on. Not a Biſhop, nor a Prieſt, ſtood out againſt Conſtantine; not ſo much as a private Chriſtian was of Licinius's Party: All went into the Revolution, and rejoiced in their Deliverance,

Theod. *l.* 1. *c.* 20.

I will not go on to ſhew how parallel that Caſe was to ours; the attempt were as needleſs, as it might ſeem invidious: Only I may well conclude, That it is not eaſy to imagine how we can be better aſſured of the ſenſe of the whole Church in any point, then we are of the ſenſe of the Chriſtians of that Age, in this particular.

I have not ſaid any thing to juſtify my putting Conſtantine's prevailing over Licinius in the Year immediately before the Council of Nice, tho Baronius puts it ſix before it. But it is viſible that he has diſordered the whole Hiſtory of Conſtantine, on deſign to maintain his being baptized at Rome, with other unjuſtifiable things; beſides that, Euſebius's Chronology in this particular, as it is of authority of it ſelf, without any other ſupport, ſo it is fully confirmed by the dates of ſome Laws in the Code, and ſeveral other Circumſtances.

It should be hoped that so great and so plain a Precedent should conclude those who have made the Primitive Church their Pattern; and who have always reckoned this one of the special Glories of the Church of England, that she built upon, and conformed her self to the first Ages of Christianity. I have now opened these two Precedents very particularly to you; they seemed to weigh much with you when I have laid them out to you in some Conferences that I have held with you upon this Subject. I hope you will both feel the force that is in them, and and will be able to manage them with more advantage now that you have them lying before you.

To conclude all. I do charge you by all the Authority I have over you, and beseech you by all the Interest that I have in you, to set your selves wholly to your Studies and Labours; to be earnest in Prayer, to continue in it, and to join fasting with it: Search the Scriptures diligently, give your selves to reading and meditation, and be you wholly in them; that so your profiting may appear unto all men; and watch over the Flock committed to your charge: Be instant in season, and out of season; to instruct, admonish, exhort and reprove; and by so doing, you shall both save your selves, and them that hear you: In doing these things, you shall always have the most constant Assistance, and the most earnest Prayers of,

8. Decem. 1693.

My Reverend

and Dear Brethren,

Your most Affectionate Brother, and

Humble Servant in the Lord,

G. SARUM.

DIS-

PART I.

Concerning the

TRUTH

OF THE

Chriſtian Religion.

THERE is not any one thing that we ought to enquire into with ſo peculiar exactneſs, as the Truth of that Religion which we believe; nor is there any thing in which we ought to be ſo converſant, and to which we ſhould be ſo well prepared, as to defend this great Argument, the Foundation of our Faith and Hope. It is a very prepoſterous way of Study to be able to argue about the retail of our Religion; I mean the particular Doctrines of it, and the ſubdiviſions into which it is broken, and not to know how to maintain it in groſs; when the truth of it is called in queſtion, either in the petulant way of profane Liberty, or with the ſubtilties of Philoſophy and Criticiſm. We may have to do with both in the Age in which we live.

The Diviſions among Chriſtians have made the World conclude, that they had a right to prove all things, that ſo they may know how to hold faſt that which is good. The Enthuſiaſms and Hypocriſies of ſome, and the Looſeneſs and Diſorders among others; the ſuperſtitious magnifying of ſmall matters, and the contending eagerly for them, while the greater, as well as the more uſeful and more uncontroverted Rules have been too viſibly and generally neglected; have furniſhed them with prejudices, that muſt be confeſſed to be but too ſpecious and plauſible: And I wiſh ſome of us may not have contributed, to make many think we are ſcarce in earneſt in arguing for the Truth of our Religion, while our Lives do but too openly teſtifie, that we do not firmly believe our own Arguments.

The great Author of our Religion has left this woe upon the World, that *offences must come*; and the heavieſt part of that woe will certainly fall upon thoſe by *whom they come*. But when we are enquiring into ſo Important a Matter, it certainly becomes us to free our Minds from Prejudices as much as we can: And neither to ſuffer our ſelves to be poſſeſſed by the firſt Impreſſions that Education made upon us, nor by our preſent Stations and Engagements on the one hand; nor to be led away by the fury of our Appetites and Paſſions, and the bad Examples that the World abounds in on the other hand: That ſo we may more freely ſearch after Truth, and both find it out, and follow it.

As a Preamble to what is to come afterwards, let us look into our Natures, and ſee if we do not feel a Principle within us that both thinks and acts freely, which is totally different from matter, which neither thinks nor chuſes. This Principle then feels that its thoughts do direct its freedom in all that it does, and therefore is capable of good or evil, of reward and puniſhment. The more diſtinctly that it thinks, and the more exactly that it follows thoſe Truths which by thinking it diſcovers, it feels it ſelf become the more perfect; the more that it can reſiſt all the Impreſſions which ariſe either from the conſtitution of the Body, or from outward Objects and Accidents, it grows to enjoy a perfecter calm within, and is enabled to go through the fatigues and chances of Life with much more eaſe and patience. The more it reſiſts the furious cravings of the Body, it enjoys a longer life, and perfecter health. There is alſo a Chain of Rules which ariſe out of theſe two Qualities, that in the opinion of all Mankind are the beſt our Nature is capable of, which are *Veracity* and *Goodneſs*, which render all the Societies of Men both ſafe and happy: They eſtabliſh a confidence, and maintain an entercourſe in the World; they give credit, and draw eſteem; they endear Men to one another, and make all the Ties, and the whole Neighbourhood and Commerce of Life firm and uſeful: And there is alſo a train of thoughts which run through a Man's mind and life, which makes him live with great advantage, and die with much firmneſs; which give him much courage, and attract much eſteem: Theſe are all things that a Man may ſafely affirm, ſince none queſtion them; and as no Man who ſees the conſtant mirth in which ſome in *Bedlam* do paſs their days, will be from thence tempted to think that they are truly happy; ſo the mad frolick in which ſome Libertines waſte both their Bodies and Minds, their Lives and Fortunes, has never impoſed ſo far on the World, as to make Men ſo much as to doubt, whether it were better to be as they are, or to be good and wiſe, calm and ſober.

This then being laid down, it is a great ſtep made in favour of any Religion, if it does exactly quadrat with it all: If the Principles that it contains, and the Rules that it preſcribes, are ſo much of a piece with this, that they do both improve and fortifie it. This does not prove it to be true indeed, but it renders it probable; it makes us inclined to believe, or at leaſt to wiſh it to be true. The thoughts of a Supream Being, who made and preſerves all things, who is everywhere, and can do whatſoever he pleaſes, raiſe vaſt Idea's in us, and give a ſort of opening and enlargement to our Powers: The ſenſe of his knowing all things, begets a compoſure, and creates an awe; the perſwaſion of his governing the World, gives a quiet, when we know, that as Infinite Power cannot be withſtood, ſo Sovereign Wiſdom cannot be miſtaken: Nothing can have ſuch influence, both on our Lives, and in our Death, as the Belief of another World, and of the Account that is to be made after Death: Nothing ſtrikes the hatred

of

of Sin, or the obligations to Vertue deeper, than the whole Theory of the Death and Sufferings of Christ. The Rules given in the Gospel to all the Orders of Men, and in all the Relations of Life, would make all Families and Societies both easie and happy; the obligation to strict justice to all others, and to an abatement of what in justice we might demand from others, by doing as we would be done by: The Rules of not only passing by, and forgiving Injuries, but of loving Enemies, and doing good for evil; the tenderness, as well as the extent of our charity, the measures and manner of our bounty to the Poor, the modesty of deportment, the condescending gentleness, as well as the unaffected humility that are enjoined, have all such Characters in them, so suited to our Faculties, and to Human Society; to the calm of a man's mind, as well as to the comforts of his life, to fortifie him against misfortunes, and to support him against the feebleness and frailties of his Nature; that he who will suffer himself to weigh all this carefully, must feel a strong disposition to believe a Religion to be true, that agrees with the highest thoughts that we can have of God, and the best Seeds or Principles that we feel within our selves.

All this receives a vast accession from the simplicity of the Worship prescribed by it, which consists chiefly in the exercise of the sublimest thoughts that we can entertain of God, and the justest that we ought to have of our selves; all which are to be expressed in the most genuine and simplest manner possible, with the fewest, but the plainest and most significant Rites. Thus a great advance is made, when a Man can be induced to lay all these things together. The whole moral and practical part of Christianity, together with the modesty and reasonableness of its Worship, are great Inducements, if not Arguments, to believe all the rest of it: And this will appear the more sensibly, if one sets by it the Idolatry and Magick, the Cruelties and Brutalities that have defiled the whole *Gentile* World, either as we find them anciently, even among the Politest Nations of *Greece* and *Rome*; and as they continue to this day in so great a part of the World, which lies still under the darkness of *Paganism*, according to the Descriptions that Navigators and Travellers have given us.

Here is the first foundation to be laid: To this is to be added, That a Nation which hates our Religion, does yet retain many Books that give a vast strength to it; and so much the greater, as they (the *Jews* I mean) have preserved those Books with great care. It was a remarkable step, when those Books were put in a Language of greater extent, and more certainly understood, than that in which they were first writ; and that long before our Religion appeared, which was done by the Men of that Nation. That Translation was received, and long used by them, which prevented endless Disputes that must have otherwise arisen in the beginnings of Christianity, concerning the true rendring of many Passages in them, which relate to an extraordinary Person, that was to be sent to them, and was looked for by them, under the name of the *Messias*: For the *Hebrew* Language, as it was little known, so it was capable of such different Readings and Interpretations, that if the matter had not been setled before by an Authentical and Authorized Translation, it does not well appear how it could have been done. A Christian would not have had credit enough, nor a *Jew* honesty enough, to have given a Work of this kind, in which the World would have acquiesced. Now in these Books, as there are some Predictions that seem looser and more general, such as those concerning the *Seed of the Woman*, *the Seed of Abraham*, and the Issue of *David*; so some, chiefly of the later Pro-

phets, fixed upon a period of time, as that he should come during the Second Temple, and within a limited course of Years; and that he should be *cut off*, but that afterwards *the City and Sanctuary should be destroyed*: *That Desolations were determined till the War should be at an end.* Now, without entring into the exact adjusting of the time limited of 70 Weeks, we do certainly know that their Temple and City were destroyed many Ages ago; and but a few Years after, that he, whom we believe to be that *Messias*, had appeared among them, and was *cut off* by them: So that either it must be owned that this was not a true Prophecy, or the *Messias* came before the destruction of *Jerusalem*: This Argument receives a vast strength by those who have made out the point of Chronology of the 70 Weeks of Years, that is 490 Years, which does exactly agree to the interval of time.

9. Dan. 24, 25, 26, 27.

This whole Matter receives a great confirmation from that Unvaluable History which *Josephus* a *Jewish* Priest, and a Man of great Learning and Judgment, well skill'd both in Civil and Military Affairs, and full of zeal both for his Country and Religion, has writ in so particular a manner, he having been an Eye-witness, and a considerable Actor in the whole Affair. Whosoever is at the pains to compare that dismal Scene with our Saviour's Predictions, sees such an agreement between them, that this is no small Argument to prove the truth of the whole Religion. Nor is it to be past over without a special remark, that we have this piece of History writ by a *Jew*, who cannot be suspected; had a Christian writ it, he might, perhaps, have been thought too partial to his Religion; or had a *Roman* writ it, he might have been suspected to have aggravated matters for raising the Triumphs of his Country; but there lies no possible colour of suspicion against *Josephus*: And since he mentions the Story both of the Forerunner, and of the Disciple of our Saviour, this is a great presumption, either that the Passage relating to our Saviour himself is genuine, or that if he said nothing of him, it was because he knew he could say nothing that could derogate from his Credit, and that he would say nothing to raise it: For it is plain from those Relations concerning St. *John Baptist* and St. *James*, that he was acquainted with the beginnings of our Religion; besides, that we see a particular Curiosity possessed him, of being well informed concerning all the different Sects that were among them, and their particular Tenets and Customs.

There are so many Passages in the Gospel, of which the *Jews* must have had such Full and Authentical Information, that if they had been falsly related, it must have been in their power to have confuted them beyond the possibility of a contradiction. So that as to this part of the Argument, so much is certain, That the *Jews* looked for their *Messias* during the Second Temple, and about the time that our Saviour appeared, which disposed them so easily to hearken to every Impostor. Their Temple has been destroyed, their Nation dispersed, their Genealogies lost, by which the certainty of their being *Abraham*'s Seed, subsists no more, and their Sacrifices have ceased now above 1600 Years. So that their hatred of us, and yet their Books agreeing with ours, when joined together, make no small part of our Argument. But now to come to the strength of our Cause, I lay it thus.

The Gospels were published in the time when many persons were yet alive, who knew, and were appealed to, for the Passages contained in them: Which is made out thus: First, They mention the Temple and Nation of the *Jews* as

still

still in being, which shews they were written before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*: More particularly, St. *Luke* writ the *Acts of the Apostles* two Years after St. *Paul's* going to *Rome*, with which he ends that Book: And he begins it with the mention of his Gospel, as writ some time before that. His Gospel also begins with an Account of some other Gospels that had been then writ. Now St. *Paul's* going to *Rome* happened two or three and twenty Years after the time of our Saviour's Passion and Resurrection, so early were these things put in writing. They were no sooner written than they were read in the Assemblies of the Christians, as the *Jews* were wont to read the Law and the Prophets in their Synagogues. This we do find from St. *Justin's* Apology, was the practice of his time, which was less than an hundred Years after they were written. So that we clearly see, these Writings were not kept as Secrets to be divulged as the Depositaries of them thought fit, according to the way that the *Romans* had used about the *Sybilline* Oracles; but were immediately copied out for the use of all the Churches, and of as many private Christians as could compass the Copying them. The Epistles of the Apostles do carry in them Characters that lead us very near the time in which they were written: And by comparing those of St. *Paul* with the Books writ by St. *Luke*, we see when most of his Epistles were writ, many of them being before his going to *Rome*: Now these Epistles were addressed to whole Bodies and Churches, and they do often appeal to the Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, as matters which were then well known, and firmly believed by all Christians: From all which I at present infer no more, but that these things were published in the time, and were known in many remote Provinces, soon after they were transacted; and were not kept close to be published in some other Age, when it might have been easie for bold Impostors to make any thing pass with a credulous multitude. Now all this was published near the Fountain, and was so soon spread, that in *Nero's* time we know by *Tacitus*, that there were great numbers of them at *Rome*, who had fallen under a *publick Odium*, and on whom *Nero*, though he had burnt *Rome* himself, threw the hatred of that Conflagration, and punished them with the severity that such a Crime, if truly proved against them, had well deserved. In the Gospels we have the Relations of our Saviour's Miracles, of many of his Transactions with the *Jewish* Nation, so circumstantiated, more particularly the Account of his Death and Resurrection, is given so minutely, that the *Jews*, who might have been easily Masters of the Books in which these were contained, had it in their power to have overthrown the credit of them, in many Instances, if they had found any falshoods in them. If they had not sealed the Sepulchre, or asked of *Pilate* a grant to watch it; if that Guard had not run away in the night, and given out a story of their having fallen asleep, the *Jews* could have well disproved this, upon which the whole depended. Now as the *Jews* were engaged, both out of their hatred of our Saviour and his Doctrine, and to justifie themselves from the Imputations of having shed his Blood, and that of his Followers, to have pursued this matter so close, as to have convinced the World of its falshood; so the progress that it made, did alarm them too much, to make any one imagine that they could despise it. They had it also in their power, by the Registers which were in their hands; and at least, during *Agrippa's* Reign, they were in so happy and flourishing a condition, that it cannot be said, that the ill state of their Affairs took from them either the heart or the leisure to look after this. All which received a great confirmation

Justin. *Apol.* 2.

from

from St. *Paul's* Converſion, who from being one, not only of their Zealots and *Phariſees*, but of the moſt furious Perſecutors of this Religion, was ſo ſtrangely ſtruck down, and changed, while a company of their own People were about him, that he became afterwards the moſt ſucceſsful of all the firſt Planters of Chriſtianity. He did very frequently appeal to that matter of Fact, in which it had been eaſie to have taken away his Credit, if they could have denied it. So far then I have gone to ſhew that this matter was publiſhed early, and in the ſight of thoſe who were both moſt concerned, and moſt able to have detected any deceit that might have been in it; who did not by any Act, of which there remains the leaſt print, among either the Writings of their own Nation, or of the other Enemies to Chriſtianity, attempt to diſcredit it.

Had not the Genealogies of Chriſt been taken exactly out of the Temple-Regiſters, the bare ſhewing of them had ſerved to have confuted the whole; for if in any one thing, the Regiſters of their Genealogies were clear and uncontroverted: Since theſe proved that they were *Abraham's* Seed, and likewiſe made out their Title to the Lands, which from the days of *Joſhua* were to paſs down, either to immediate Deſcendants, or as they failed, to Collateral Degrees. Now this ſhews plainly, that there was a double Office kept of their Pedigrees, one was natural, and might be taken when the Rolls of Circumciſion were made up; and the other related to the Diviſion of the Land, in which when the Collateral Line came inſtead of the Natural, then the laſt was dropt, as extinct, and the other remained: It being thus plain from their Conſtitution, that they had theſe two Orders of Tables, we are not at all concerned in the diverſity of the two Evangeliſts on this head, ſince both might have Copied them out from thoſe two Offices at the Temple; and if they had not done it faithfully, the *Jews* could have Authentically demonſtrated their Error, in entitling our Saviour to that received Character of the *Meſſias*, that he was to be *the Son of David* by a falſe Pedigree; therefore ſince no Exceptions were made in the time when the ſight of the Rolls muſt have ended the Enquiry, it is plain that they were faithfully Copied out: Nor are we now bound to anſwer ſuch difficulties as ſeem to ariſe out of them, ſince they were not queſtioned in the time in which only an Appeal could be made to the Publick Regiſters themſelves. If then it is yielded, that thoſe Publick Actions done in the ſight of many Witneſſes, paſſed, without being challenged or diſproved in that time, here was a ſeries of moſt wonderful things, done by a man with a word: He calmed Seas and Winds, he fed great multitudes out of a very ſmall Store, which increaſed vaſtly as it was diſtributed; he cured the moſt deſperate Diſeaſes, ſuch as Palſies and Leproſies: He gave ſight to the Blind, ſtrength to the Lame, and hearing to the Deaf; he healed many of their Infirmities; and which was more than all the reſt, he raiſed ſome that were dead, to life again: One was indeed but newly dead, but another was led out to be buried, and a third had been four days dead: His own Reſurrection, Aſcenſion, and the wonderful Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt, ſurpaſſed all, and were the confirming Seals and Teſtimonies of his whole Doctrine; and proved that he was ſent and Authoriſed by God. And beſides the Miracles which were wrought by thoſe whom he ſent to Preach his Doctrine, the Gift of Tongues that they had, as it was abſolutely neceſſary for the diſcharge of their Commiſſion, of going to teach all Nations; ſo it was of a nature not to be capable of an Impoſture; ſince it was in the power of every ſingle man to have diſcovered the truth or falſhood

falſhood of it. In other Miracles it may be ſuggeſted, that Witneſſes might be ſo managed, as to carry on the credit of them, true or falſe: But the Apoſtles having given this out as a part, and a main part of their Hiſtory, we cannot ſuppoſe but that this was true, otherwiſe the falſhood of it muſt have been diſcovered, and with it the whole muſt have ſunk.

If theſe extraordinary things were really tranſacted as they are related, it cannot be pretended that they were the effects of ſome Secrets in Nature, which our Saviour might know: For though the Loadſtone may be plaid with ſo much variety, as to amuſe a ſimple man; and though Jugglers by a ſlight of hand ſeem to do wonders; yet the vaſt variety, as well as the great uſefulneſs of our Saviour's Miracles, ſhews he was not limited to a few Secrets, which work always one way: Nor were the Wonders he did, ſhews of Pomp, that do only amuſe; but they were things of ſuch uſe to Mankind, that it very well became one who was ſent of God to prove his Miſſion by them: Nor can it be ſaid that Imagination wrought powerfully, and made People fancy they ſaw things that they ſaw not; or that the perſuaſion which ſome took up, might ſo ſtrike their Fancy, as really to cure their Diſeaſes; for though a Hypochondriacal perſon may be deceived, eſpecially in the dark or twilight, yet numbers of People in full daylight could not agree in the ſame Miſtakes: Some Effects were too ſignal to be ſo miſtaken; ſuch, as for a Man born blind, to be made to ſee by a word; or for a Storm to be calmed with a Rebuke: And tho' in critical Diſeaſes, ſuch as Feavers, which lie in the fermentations of the Blood, a ſtrong Conceit may have a real Operation; yet Chronical Diſtempers, and Natural Defects go not off by Fancy. Nor can it be thought that theſe wonderful Operations could come from the aſſiſtance of an Evil Spirit; for ſince our Saviour's Doctrine tended wholly to pull down the Kingdom of *Satan*, to deſtroy Idolatry and Magick, and to root out all Immorality, an Evil Spirit could not co-operate to carry on ſo good a Deſign; otherwiſe it had changed its nature, and from being bad, muſt have grown good; ſo that our Saviour's Anſwer to this Objection was full and clear; that *if Satan was divided againſt himſelf, his kingdom could not ſtand*: For our Saviour's Doctrine being ſo totally oppoſite to him, if he had joined his force to give it credit, he muſt thereby have pulled down his own Kingdom.

But to give Infidelity its utmoſt advantage, we ſhall now conſider that which is its laſt refuge, and chief ſtrength; which is, "That in all Ages "ſome Men have been ſo bold and crafty, while the Herd has been ſo ſimple "and credulous, that many Impoſtors have paſt upon the World in ſuch "different ſhapes, that though we cannot diſcover the conduct of them, yet "we are not for that to judge in favour of them; and therefore though it is "not eaſie to aſſign the method how Chriſtianity came to be received, we "may ſtill have reaſon to miſtruſt the whole matter. This might be tolerably alledged, if there were any one thing in our Religion that gave the leaſt ſhadow to ſuſpicion: if the Teachers of it had pretended either to Authority, Wealth, or Pleaſure; if, on the contrary, the Rules that were laid down in it, did not ſhut out all theſe: For whatſoever corrupt Men may have brought in ſince by an after-game, that has no relation to the Beginnings and Doctrines of our Religion, which does directly contradict them. So far were the firſt Publiſhers of this from expecting advantages by it, that they knew they were to be expoſed to much contempt and hatred, and that by their own Countrymen, in

which

which there is a peculiar ſting: They looked for ſevere Perſecutions, nor were they diſappointed; they endured great Hardſhips, by Want and Poverty, by Impriſonments, and Cruel Whippings, and in concluſion, they loſt their Lives in the Cauſe: And they did ſo certainly reckon for all this, that they warned their firſt Converts of a *fiery trial* that was to come upon them, and of *much tribulation through which they muſt enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Impoſtors muſt draw on their Followers by ſpecious Promiſes, and flattering Hopes; and it argues a great certainty of ſucceſs, as well as an aſſurance of the truth of a Cauſe, when thoſe who promote it, are ſo far from drawing on Men by Allurements, till they are once engaged, that they warn them early of the dangers and difficulties that are before them: With this our Saviour begun, when he ſaid, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, take up his croſs daily, and become my diſciple.* The ſevere Morals which accompany this Doctrine, and are indeed a main part of it, are a very lively character of Integrity: The true Secret of all Corrupt Religions is, That they propoſe ſomewhat to be done for the honour of the Deity, by which their Votaries may compenſate with God, and may buy off their Obligations to ſolid and true Vertue: But a Religion that propoſes a ſimple and naked Worſhip, with ſuch eaſie performances in it, that no Man can ſuppoſe the bare doing of them is any way meritorious; and that propoſes theſe, not as compenſations, but as helps to real Holineſs, and that carries the obligation to it, into the ſecret receſſes of the heart, to our very thoughts, words and looks, has nothing of the air or genius of Impoſture in it.

1 Per. 4. 12. Acts 14. 22. 16. Matth. 24, 25.

A Religion that flatters no part of Mankind, no not thoſe who are in poſſeſſion of the greateſt eſteem, has a farther character of truth in it. The *Jews* valued themſelves upon their being *Abraham's* Poſterity, and their having a *Law* of many *Precepts* given them by God; among them the moſt popular were the *Phariſees*, who valued themſelves chiefly upon many voluntary Obſervances, as *fences and outworks to the Law*, which kept them out of danger of diſobeying. Now a great part of the Doctrine of our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, was deſigned to beat them out of theſe, to diſcover the Hypocriſie of the *Phariſees*; to ſhew them that all the *Gentile* Nations were now to be ſet on the ſame level with them, and that thenceforth the obligation and vertue of all their Legal Performances was at an end. The Apoſtles ſhewed as little inclination to gratifie or flatter the moſt admired part of Heatheniſm, I mean the *Philoſophers*, who delighted in lofty Eloquence, refined Subtilty, and ſublime Metaphiſicks: But nothing of all this appearing among them, they were deſpiſed by the Philoſophers, who eſteemed all Inſpiration, Madneſs; and were prepoſſeſſed againſt both Miracles and Prophecies, as no better than Juggleries. There was nothing left to gain, but the Rabble and Herd, and yet theſe were not flattered neither. They are always ſtruck with Pomp and Magnificence, they love Sights and Shows, and a ſplendid Exterior in Religion, to which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* had been ſo much accuſtomed, that beſides the difficulty of making them forſake the Religion of their Fathers, in which they had been educated, which is always a thing of an ill ſound, and of a bad appearance; they were to draw them from Pageantry to Simplicity; and from outward and coſtly Shews, to a naked, plain way of ſtrictneſs and purity. In all theſe things it muſt be confeſſed, that there is nothing of the methods of Impoſture: Now to ſuſpect that any Artifice lies hid, when all appearances contradict it, is a very unreaſonable

sonable piece of jealousie, and looks as if Men were resolved to suspect only for suspicion's sake. When therefore there is positive proof brought on the one side, of Miracles publickly done, attested by great numbers of Witnesses, published in the same Age, while great multitudes were yet alive, who were appealed to, and who did so confirm these Books, that they were read in all the Assemblies of the Saints or Christians, as the Text and Rule of their Belief, as well as of their Manners; when, I say, all this is proved, and when there appears nothing, neither in the Doctrine it self, nor in the management of the Apostles, and their first Converts, to furnish us with any colour of apprehending any foul dealing, it is an unreasonable thing, still to stand upon the general Argument, of the possibility of an Imposture.

But though it be not necessary, and indeed in many cases not possible, to prove a Negative, yet this Argument is so full of evidence, that even that may be undertaken here. There are four things possible that may be alledged as methods to support the possibility of a Deceit, put on the World in this matter.

The 1*st* is, That the Apostles intended a Deceit, which they contrived and managed successfully.

The 2*d* is, That they themselves were deceived, and were made Tools to abuse others.

The 3*d* is, That the whole Matter went about in Tales and Stories, till by every one's magnifying them, they grew to be believed without strict enquiry, and due proof made.

And the 4*th* is, That the Books which contain this Doctrine were at first more sparingly writ, but were afterwards interpolated, many Passages being put in them that had not been in them at first. I have never met with, nor can I imagine any other Hypothesis for Infidelity to found upon; and I am not afraid to name all these, because I am very certain I can demonstrate the absolute Incredibility of every one of them.

1. As to the first, Of the Apostles having contrived and managed this, on design to abuse the World. We see nothing in them that looks like this; a plain Simplicity and unaffected Honesty appears in all their Discourses and Actions: They were not bred to Literature, Eloquence, or Policy; some one or all of which are necessary for Men who venture upon such Undertakings: And therefore Persons utterly unfurnished in them are little to be suspected. But if Men be without all these helps, at least they must be naturally subtile and dextrous, bold and daring: Since Nature, when well moulded, may be capable of great matters, without the refinings of Art. Now the Apostles, as they were all, except St. *Paul*, of *Galilee*, which bred the most contemptible Men of all *Judea*; so they were Fishermen by their Trade, which of all the Imployments that we know, does naturally flat the Spirits the most: They are in the Water much, in the Night for most part, and in open Boats, which expose them to such cold and flegmatick Air, that this must needs dull their Spirits exceedingly. But let us suppose them to be as capable, either of the wickedness of contriving, or of the skill in managing such a Fraud, as prophane Men can fancy them to be. I go next to shew, that the Supposition is absurd. The Resurrection of Christ was the main point upon which all the rest turned. I am now to suppose what shall afterwards be proved, That this matter went

abroad at first in the same manner in which we do now read it in the Gospel; and so in this place I am only to shew, that the Relation which we now have, could not be the contrivance of the Apostles. Our Saviour was laid in a *new Tomb*, not an Ancient Sepulchre, to which there might have been secret Avenues, that had been so long forgot, that they were known only to some few persons. This was both newly made, and hewen out of a *Rock*: So it might have been well examined, and a passage could not be wrought into it in a night or two. This happened likewise in the beginning of the *Paschal* Solemnity, when it was *Full Moon*, which in so pure an Air gives a very bright light. At that time *Jerusalem* was so full of People, all the *Jews* coming up to keep the *Feast*, that it being then their Summer, since we see *handfulls of Corn* were to be offered up at that time, as the *First-fruits* of the Years growth; we have reason to believe, that great numbers, who could not be conveniently lodged in *Jerusalem*, were in so pleasant a time, and at so great a Rendezvous, walking in the Fields in the night-time. These things cannot be denied: The Apostles had also seen, that one of their number, of whom they had suspected no such thing before, had betrayed our Saviour; that the fear with which they themselves were struck upon his apprehension, had made them all run away, and forsake him; and in particular, that he who had been on other occasions the forwardest of them all, and who had been warned by our Saviour of his danger, and so was, by consequence, on his guard, and less likely to fall, had yet upon a remote apprehension of danger, with repeated Oaths denied that he knew him. Now he who through fear will deny a truth, is much more like, upon the same, or a greater danger, to discover a falshood. This being the state of that matter, let us now see how we can possibly imagine the Apostles, who knew what effects fear had so lately upon themselves, and who had also seen to what a degree one of them might be corrupted, could so far trust either themselves or one another in such a matter, in which they had reason to believe, that the *Jews*, who had gone so far with their Master, would spare neither arts nor violence to fetch out the Secret: Besides, that to venture on an Imposture, which goes so much against Human Nature, and which naturally strikes Men with fears and jealousies, Men must be long practised to boldness, and must have made such essays upon themselves, and upon one another, as to think they are secure of all that are in the Confidence. But let us pass over all this, and then see how the matter, when resolved on, could have been managed. Either they were to steal away the Body of Christ, or to leave it in the Sepulchre. If they had left it, all must have broke out immediately; the bare exposing the Body must have confuted all that they could have said; so it must be supposed that they carried it away: Now how this could be done when a Watch was set, when the Moon shone bright, and such numbers of Men were wandring about in every corner, is not easie to be imagined. Some persons to a considerable number must be imployed, if it had been to be carried to any distance, and they could not think themselves safe if it had been laid near the place of the Sepulchre: Some trace or print must have remained, if they had broke ground; which they must have expected would have been looked for; and being found out, would have discovered all; not to mention the natural horror that all Men have, at the handling *dead Bodies*, even in what is necessary for their *burial*, but most of all *Jews*, who by their Law became *defiled* to a high degree

gree by it. But suppose the dead Body so disposed of, that they apprehended to hear no more news of it, how is it to be imagined, that those frequent Apparitions of our Saviour's, particularly that in *Galilee*, to Five hundred at once, which is appealed to, while many of them were yet alive, could have been managed. Here then, we have first twelve Witnesses, against whom no just exception lies, even to feed suspicion, who affirm a matter of fact, and call in many others as their Vouchers to support their Testimony: They stand to it to the last, tho' they suffered much for it, and could not possibly gain any thing by it; and yet are supposed by Infidels to contrive and stick to a Forgery, meerly to perswade the World to Vertue and Purity, and to Sincerity and Truth; which they begin with a train of falshood and deceit, without any other visible Bait but their love to their dead *Master*; that they might magnifie him, and give him a lasting Name, and wipe off the reproach of his infamous Death, by this bold Contrivance of theirs. A Man that can suppose all this to be possible, will suppose any thing; and shews, that he has no regards, so much as to the colours of Truth, but will advance any thing, rather than be beaten out of his Infidelity.

But to follow this matter more home; a part, and a great one, of the History of the Gospel, is, That ten days after our Saviour ascended up into Heaven, in the sight of his Apostles, which with Infidels will pass for a part of the contrivance, they received such extraordinary Illapses and Powers from Heaven, in consequence to the *Promises* that our Saviour had made them, that they were enabled to work Miracles, and to *speak with divers Tongues*: and the first essay of this appeared at the next Festival of the *Jews*, in which *Jerusalem* was again filled, not only with all the *Jews* of *Judea*, but also with those of the dispersion, who from all Quarters were come up at Pentecost, from the East, as far as from *Persia* and *Media*, from the West, as far as from *Rome* and *Libia*, from the South, as far as from *Arabia*, and from the North, as far as from *Parthia*, and many Provinces of *Asia the Less*, and from several Islands, as well as from the Continent. Here was an astonishing thing, to see unlettered men, all of the sudden break out in speaking of Languages, in which they had no sort of Education or Practice: Fevers or Enthusiastical Heats may inflame men so far, as to make them speak those Languages which they understand, tho' they are not otherwise ready at them; for the Prints being already in their Brains, a strong exaltation of their Spirits, may fetch those out much better than they themselves in a cooler and more sedate state could have done; but where there are no previous Impressions, no heat whatsoever can fetch out that which is not within: Now as this was the most necessary of all other things to qualifie men to execute their Commission, of going to *teach all Nations*, in which they must have made a very slow progress, if they must have learned the Language of every Countrey to which they were to go; so it was the most signal of all others, and as was formerly hinted at, was that which must have been presently discover'd if it had not been notoriously and unquestionably true. With these Powers, and those Languages, the Apostles went every where; and promised to confer the like gifts on those that should receive and believe their Gospel: And in the Epistles which they writ afterwards to those Churches, even when their Authority was called in question, they appealed to the gifts of the Holy Ghost conferred by their means; so that either these things were notoriously true, or they must have been despised as the most assuming and impudent of all Impostors: These were

Rom 15. 19. 1 Cor 14. 2 Cor. 12. 12. 3 Gal. 5. 1 Thes. 1. 5. 1 Tim. 1. 20. Heb. 2. 4.

were their Credentials that procured them a hearing; and as men were *disposed to eternal Life*, so they received and entertained their Message. Thus we have seen by a great variety of Considerations which this matter presents to us, that not only there is no colour of Reason, to incline a man to think that the Apostles designed to impose upon the World, but that there is all possible Reason to the contrary, to persuade us, that they were in no respect capable of projecting any such thing, nor of effecting it if they had intended it.

II. The 2*d*. Supposition of Infidelity is, That they themselves might have been deceived by two or three designing persons, who might have imposed upon them: that in the twilight a troubled fancy might be made imagine, that they saw Christ, which being affirmed by those who were in the secret, the rest might so far comply with those who said they saw him, as either to imagine it, or at least to yield to the rest, so as to say, that they saw him; for so conceits do sometimes spread, and whole crouds fancy they see or hear things, being faced down by the boldness of a few impudent persons; and this being once set about, the same Artifices might prevail again and again upon the same weaknesses. This might look tolerable, if there were no more to be said for the Resurrection of Christ than one or two transient views; but continued discourses, the reaching his Hands and Side to be felt to; Christ's appearance to numbers in full day-light, with all the Series of what passed between him and his Disciples; and finally, his blessing them, and being parted from them, and ascending up to Heaven; but above all, the wonderful Pentecosts that followed it, the strange Effusion of the Holy Ghost, and the extraordinary Gifts that were then given, were things in which it was not possible for men to be deceived.' So that the Apostles did either certainly know that all those things which they attested were true, or that they were false; there can be no mean in the matter; and indeed this objection is so slight, that it scarce deserved to be considered.

III. The 3*d*. pretence is more specious; That the History of the Gospel passed easily upon the World, without due Examination, that it appears both by some hints that are in the *New Testament*, and several passages in *Josephus*, that the *Jews* were at that time very credulous, and were apt to follow every Pretender: they were broken into several Sects, and under great Distractions and Oppressions, which prepare men to hearken after Novelties: so that great numbers might run in upon Rumours, and they being once engaged, they might reckon, that in honour they could not go off, and would stick to it even to the hazard of their Lives. So we see some Enthusiasts and Sectaries in all Ages, have courted Martyrdom, and endured great Misery with a triumphant Firmness. But to answer all this, a great difference is to be made between points of Speculation, and matters of Fact; in the former, men drink in perswasions, and then they grow to be so full of them, especially when a conceit of their own understanding is twisted with them, so that they think it an Affront to their own Reason, at least a detracting from its reputation, to confess so publickly that they were mistaken; but in matters of Fact the thing is quite otherwise, these are to be strictly enquired into, and a man's believing them imports no more, but that he had a good Opinion of those that informed him, nor is it any reproch to be too easy in this; it rather argues a man to be candid and good in himself, which makes him to apt too think well of others, and to believe them: and how firm soever men may be to Opinions, when they have

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once approved themselves, so that Self-love works secretly, yet they are still ready to re-examine matters of Fact, when their first Informations are called in question; especially if they are like to suffer considerably for owning and espousing them. It is very true, that the *Jews* had so general an expectation of a Messias about this time, that they were apt to run after every Pretender, yet they were as apt to forsake him, when their hopes failed them. But all their expectations run in so different a Channel, from what they saw in our Saviour, that how much soever their Curiosity might have prompted them once to run to him, their prejudices drew them so strongly from him, that nothing but mighty and unanswerable Evidence could make them still adhere to him. They had groaned long under the Slavery of a bloody Tyrant, they hated *Herod* and his Family, they could not bear the *Roman* Yoke, that was coming over them. They fancied a Messias should come, in whom the Characters of a *Moses* and a *David* should meet, that he should raise the Honour of their *Nation*, and establish the Observances of their *Laws*. There were three things in our Saviour and his Doctrine, any one of which was sufficient to disgust them. 1*st*. His mean and humble Appearance; whereas they looked for a glorious Conquerour and a magnificent Prince. When he made nothing of *paying tribute to Cæsar*, and despised the offers of a Crown, they could not but despise him for it, according to their Notions. 2*ly*. His seeming to set a low value on the Observances of the Law, and his Disciples setting the *Gentiles* at liberty from them, was of all things that which appeared to them the most odious and impious: they were so accustomed to a Reverence for those Rites, that no sort of Immorality could strike them, so much as a coldness in them, and therefore they could not bear some Liberties which our Saviour or his Disciples took on the Sabbath day, even tho' those could have well been reconciled to the Letter of the Law; And 3*ly*. besides the common fondness that all men have for their Countrey, they had so particular a value for their own, for *Abraham's Circumcised Posterity*, and such a contempt for all the Heathen Nations, who were no better than *Dogs* in their esteem; that the many broad hints that appeared in our Saviour's Parables and Discourses in favour of the *Gentiles*, and the open Declaration which the Apostles soon after made, of bringing them into an equality of Dignity and Priviledges with themselves, was such a stone of stumbling to every natural *Jew*, that nothing besides a full and uncontested Evidence could have ballanced it: Therefore tho' it may be confessed, that the Circumstances the *Jews* were in, made them easy to be practised upon, and to run as often as any said, see *here is the Messias*, or *there he is*; yet their Prejudices and false Notions were so rooted in them, that as a great many of them left our Saviour, and fell off from his Apostles, when they understood the Tendencies of his Doctrine; So those that stuck to him, were without doubt so far shaken by those prejudices, that they made them examine all things the more critically, and particularly look into those wonderful matters of Fact that were believed among them; so that how easy soever their first Credulity might have been, they must have re-consider'd the matter more narrowly before they could overcome Principles and Notions that were so deeply rooted in them. Men are not easily carried to forsake their Friends and Families, to draw upon them the Hatred and Curses of their Countreymen. These things have a Charm and Authority in them, which few can withstand; but when it rested not there, but went on to all sorts of Outrages, to the spoiling their Goods, the imprisoning their Persons, to cruel Whippings,

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to the beheading ſome, and the Stoning others, when this Fury grew ſo general, that even *devout and honourable Women* in contradiction to the Gentleneſs and Decencies of their Sex, went in to it; then at leaſt it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they made all poſſible enquiries into the matters of Fact. I do acknowledge that the Martyrdoms in the ſucceeding Ages, are no concluding proof in the behalf of our Religion, but in the firſt Age, in which the queſtion was, Whether ſuch things were ſeen and heard, or not; Mens ſuffering ſo much for their perſuaſions, ſhews this at leaſt, that they were ſo perſuaded. Therefore when this was the point, Whether they had ſeen or heard ſuch or ſuch things? Their adhering firmly to it, ſhewed that they did ſo believe.

The caſe was yet more amazing with relation to the *Gentiles*, who were generally given up to a ſenſual as well as to a ſenſible Religion, that was overrun with Idolatry and Magick; who were not acquainted with the Prophecies that were among the *Jews*, and deſpiſed them as a mean and a factious Nation, that had an ill-natur'd Religion; ſo that they had not that diſpoſition among them, which awaken'd the Curioſity of the *Jews*. They had been ſo accuſtomed to groſs and lewd Fables concerning their gods, that it was the moulding them anew, to talk of One Inviſible Deity, and of a Spiritual Worſhip, or a ſevere Morality, eſpecially in ſome Particulars, ſuch as the reſtraint of Appetite, or the loving an Enemy. Add to all this, that the Heathen Prieſts were ſoon aware, that this Doctrine would have very ill effects upon their Profits and Authority; therefore they animated the World into a moſt implacable Hatred of them, which broke out ſoon into moſt violent Perſecutions: and as the Governors of the Provinces and ſubaltern Magiſtrates were willing enough to gratify the People in their Fury, ſo the Emperors themſelves were ſoon ſet on againſt them. The reſtleſs Tempers of the *Jews* at that time had ſo provoked them, that it was crime enough for the Chriſtians to be conſider'd as a Sect of the *Jews*; and ſo careleſs were they in *Rome*, of enquiring exactly into thoſe Matters, that we find by *Suetonius*, that they believed that Chriſt had ſet on the *Jews* to all their Seditions, by which they muſt have been enflamed ſo much the more againſt the Chriſtians; and if ſuch a Monſter as *Nero* was rightly informed of the exactneſs of their Morals, that muſt have ſharpned him ſo much the more againſt them. There was in his time a vaſt multitude of them at *Rome*, the matter of fact concerning Chriſt's being put to Death in *Tiberius*'s Reign by *Pontius Pilate*, Procurator at *Judea*, was ſo well known, that it was put in the Annals of that time; and the Chriſtians appeal'd to the Publick Regiſters for many other Particulars relating to it. No wonder if the Singularity of their Doctrine, and the Strictneſs of their Lives, draw a general Hatred upon them; *Nero* laid hold on this, and he having once faſtned the burning of *Rome* upon them, was obliged to follow that with a ſeverity proportion'd to the heavineſs of the Imputation. Upon all theſe Accounts we ſee how little the *Gentiles* were diſpoſed to hearken to our Saviour's Doctrine, or to the Teſtimony of his Apoſtles; and as for the few Philoſophers that were among them, as they were more likely to look into the Proofs that were offer'd, or the Evidence that was given, with an inquiſitive Strictneſs, ſo they were as ſtrongly prejudic'd againſt it, as either their Pride or their Principles could make them; they were haughty and ſcornful men, they deſpiſed the vulgar as a contemptible Herd, and undervalued all that were not formed into their Notions, and accuſtomed to their Cant. They had ſuch a high Opinion

Sueton. in Claudio.

Tacit. annal. 15.

of

of their own Understandings and their Theories, that they were possessed against Inspiration, Miracles and Prophecy; they could not digest Mysteries, nor hear any thing that seem'd to rise above a Man's Understanding: nor could they endure a Doctrine that took in all sorts of People within it; reckoning, that only men of a peculiar frame of Mind, and of a singular Education, were capable of true Philosophy; and they were men that studied both to be popular and safe: so that howsoever *Socrates* had exposed himself to the fury of the *Athenians*, by contradicting the received Opinions concerning the Divinity; yet all the later Pretenders had avoided his fate, by complying with receiv'd Opinions and Practises. So that upon all these accounts we see, that all sorts of people were at the beginnings of Christianity so strongly prejudic'd against many things in it, that nothing but a very extraordinary Evidence could have overcome it; nothing less than the *demonstration of the Spirit*, that is of the Inspiration that did actuate them, which was given with power in mighty Signs and Wonders, could have overcome it. It was to this that they always appealed, and this only could conquer such mighty Prejudices. When the love of this World, together with the fears of suffering, made many fall back, chiefly to Judaism, we do not find that they furnish'd the Enemies of this Religion with any thing to object to it, or detract from it; tho' Apostates, who to justifie their own change, and to beat off the Reproaches of those whom they forsake, are observ'd to have a peculiar sharpness against those of whose Sect they once were. They may be apt to forge unjust Slanders and Calumnies, but are not like to suppress any scandalous Truth that they can suggest against them: and yet we find no Prints of any such things alledged by any of them; If there had been either Delusion, Imposture or Magick in those great Performances, those Apostates could have discover'd all such Secrets; some having fallen away that had been *partakers of the Holy Ghost, and of the Powers of the World to come*; that is of the Dispensation of the Messias. We see by *Pliny*'s Epistle how early Christianity had spread it self over the Northern parts of *Asia the Lesser*, filling not only their Towns and Cities, but even their Villages and Hamlets, to such a degree, that the Temples of the gods were forsaken, and no more Sacrifices were offer'd at their Altars: He adds, that many had of their own accord return'd back from that Religion, before he had begun to prosecute them; some three years before, others more, and one five and twenty years before that time: Which is a good Character, to shew us how early Christianity had been spread in those parts; he adds, that an Incredible Multitude was informed against, and that his severity had brought back a great many; by these he might have been well informed concerning them. He adds, that since he saw such numbers in danger of falling under the severity of the Imperial Edicts, he had tortured two of their *Deaconesses*, that he might draw from them all the secrets that were amongst them: but he found nothing, only an inflexible aversion to the Worship of the gods, and the Genius of the Emperor; and that they met and Sung Hymns to Christ as a God, and were tied by Vows not to commit Adultery, nor to Steal, or deceive, or commit other Crimes; and that their Feasts were Innocent and harmless. This happening not above Seventy Years after our Saviour's Death, shews us how fast this Doctrine did spread, and what vast number had then embraced it; and yet these being all born and bred with such prejudices against it, cannot be supposed to have received it too rashly, or to have believed it implicitly.

1 Cor. 2. 4.

6 Heb. 4. 5.

Plin. Lib. 10. Ep. 97.

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IV. The last supposition of Infidelity yet remains to be consider'd, which is, 'That something must be yielded to have been published and received concerning this Religion, soon after its first appearance; but that in process of time the Books might have been Interpolated, after all the Eye-witnesses were dead, and many Additions of great Importance might have been clapt in afterwards. And this indeed is the plausiblest part of their whole Plea; for if they yield that the Books which we now have, were given out in the same manner as we have them, and that they were receiv'd in the Age in which many Eye-witnesses were alive to vouch them, then all that can be cavilled at, after this is once yielded, is so poor and slight, that it only shews the incurable obstinacy of those who maintain it. This last has more colour: there were many Gospels given out at first, as St. *Luke* informs us, some false Gospels there were; and there was a considerable diversity among some Copies; parcels were in some, that were left out in others: and it could scarce be otherwise, while many were Writing what they themselves knew and saw, and others might Copy these too hastily, and uncorrectly: Yet within a hundred years after our Saviour's Death, we find this matter was so settled, that we see these Books were cited by *Justin*, and *Iremæus*, not to mention the Epistles of *Clemens*, *Ignatius* and *Policarp*; and from them downward, in a continued succession of Writers, and they were such as we now have them. I except only such small variations, as might be the mistakes and errours of Copies; all which when put together, amount to nothing that is of any Importance to the matters of our Belief, or the Rule of our Life. Now, when we consider how near St. *John* lived to that time, and that *Irenæus* was instructed by *Policarp*, who was ordained by St. *John*, and lived not far from him, when we see what weight *Irenæus* lays on the *Scriptures*, in opposition to all *Oral Tradition*, and how positively he makes his appeals to them: when we see how soon after that time, both the *Greek* and *Latin*, the *Roman* and *African* Churches, those of *Syria* and *Ægypt*, do all agree to cite the same Books, in the same words, or with inconsiderable variations, we have all reason to conclude, that this great point of the Books was setled much sooner: since by the end of a hundred years they were in all Peoples hands, and were read in all the Assemblies of Christians; they were also read by their Enemies, *Trypho* in particular, as *Justin* informs us: we see also soon after this, that *Celsus* had read them; and indeed, it is plain from all the Christian Writers in those Ages, that the Books of the N. Testament were in all mens hands; they quote them so often in their Apologies, and other Books, as Writings that were generally read and known: such a spreading of Books, and multiplying of Copies, was a work of time, when all was to be writ out; and this was so near the Fountain, that we have all reason to believe that the Originals at least of St. *Paul's* Epistles to the Churches, were still preserved: and tho an Oral Tradition of a Doctrine, even for so short a period, is so doubtful a conveyance, that it were not easy to think, that it might not have enlarged a little beyond the truth; yet a Tradition of some Books could hardly in so very short a time have been varied, or altered, chiefly in so important a point, as the Resurrection of Christ, which was the main Article of their belief, and that which runs as a Thread through all the Sermons and Epistles of the Apostles: and indeed, this being once yielded, settles all the rest with it. Therefore since we have such a Copious concurrence of Authors that cite those Books all-a-long, from that time downwards, besides

sides the Epistles of those Apostolical Men, St. *Clement*, St. *Ignatius*, and St. *Policarp*, the first having writ in that very time, probably before the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the other two soon after it; in which several of the Books of the N. Testiment are cited, as Writings then well known, and in all mens hands: we must from all this firmly conclude, that the Books, as we now have them, are not altered from the form in which they were at first writ.

They were quickly Copied out for the use of the Churches; they were read at the Assemblies of the Christians; they were Translated into the vulgar Tongues, particularly the *Latin* and *Syriach*, very early; so that they becoming so soon publick, and getting into so many hands, it was not possible for any one, who might have had the wickedness to have attempted the corrupting them, to have compassed it afterwards. And what noise soever the Enemies of our Faith may make of the various readings, and how much soever the bulk of them, as they are added to the *Polyglot* Bible, may at first view strike the eye; yet when all these are examined, they amount not to any one variation in any Article of our Faith, and they appear so plainly to be the slips of the Writers, that this can never shake any man who will be at the pains to search it to the bottom. So that I have now gone round all the suppositions of Infidelity, and have, I hope, clearly evinced, that there is not any one of them which is in any sort credible, or even possible.

Obj. I will in conclusion consider some few of their Objections, indeed all that I have ever met with, which seem to have any force; 'Some cannot imagine 'why our Saviour, after his Resurrection, shewed himself only to a few, and 'did not come in next day to the Temple, and shew himself to that vast Assembly, 'which was then to be there; since that must for ever have put an end to all 'doubting, and have silenced all his Enemies. This were a very reasonable Objection, if *God's ways were as our ways*: our warm tempers that boil with resentment, and that pursue eagerly our own Vindication, would have no doubt wrought this way; but if we go to ask an account of all God's Works or Ways, we shall find them very different from our own Notions. A great part of his Creation seems useless to us: much of it seems defective, as well as another part seems superfluously redundant to us: there are many very unaccountable things, both in the structure of our Bodies, and the temper of our Minds; and if we will quarrel with every thing that does not suit our own Notions, we will be very uneasie in our Thoughts. There are some Sins, for which God gives over all further dealing with Persons and Nations, and upon which he delivers them up to their own reprobate minds: and when he has used such sufficient means, as might well serve to convince and reform them, he lets them alone, and *leaves them to their own hearts lusts*: Those who had seen so many of our Saviour's Miracles, which, instead of having a good effect on them, did only serve to harden them the more in their opposition to him, did well deserve that God should suffer them to harden themselves still more and more: and it was enough that Christ shewed himself so often to such a competent number of unexceptionable Witnesses, and give them full powers to prove their Testimony concerning him, by working such Miracles as he himself had wrought. Why he did it in this way, and in no other, is among the Secrets of his Councils, which are to us unsearchable. When our Souls become more perfect, our Capacities and Faculties more enlarged, and our Thoughts more exalted, then we may come to understand the reason of these things more perfectly

than it is possible for us to do in this depressed and darkned state. One thing after all we may gather from our Saviour's words, who has pronounced them *blessed who have not seen, and yet have believed*; and from the value that in many places of the New Testament is set on *faith* and on *believing*, that God did not intend to give the World such an undeniable Evidence, as that it should be out of their power to disbelieve: for to believe either such things as our Senses do plainly perceive, or to believe Mathematical Truths, is that to which our Nature constrains us, and for which we can deserve no sort of commendation. Therefore to make our Faith to be both well grounded, and also highly acceptable to God, it is enough that there are sufficient Reasons offered to us, to persuade our belief, and that there is no good reason to the contrary, tho' we may start possibilities of imaginary reasons against it; and a Man who is so far convinced by those, that he is from thence determin'd to believe all the other parts of that Revelation, both the Promises and the Precepts of it, so that he gives himself up to its conduct in the whole course of his Life, in the assured expectation of the Promises it sets before him; has such a Faith, that must certainly be of great value in the sight of God; because it has a great effect on the believer himself. There is Beauty enough in the Rules of our Religion, to oblige every Man to examine well the Authority upon which it rests, and to him that will set his thoughts a working upon it, this Authority will soon appear strong enough to determine his assent: and when that has its due operation upon him, then his Faith has had its full effect. So that it is no dull, nor lazy, or implicite Faith on which the *New Testament* sets so high a value; it is a *Faith* that *purifies the Heart*, that *worketh by Love*, that makes us *new Creatures*, and engages us to *keep the Commandments of God*. So that this Objection has no other force in it but this, That God's Ways are a great depth, and to us are past finding out.

2. A second Objection is, 'That if our Saviour and his Apostles gave such 'Proofs of their Mission, how is it to be imagined, that any Man could be 'so obstinate, as to stand it out against so full a Conviction? These things 'were probably enquired into at that time, by Men of all sides; Curiosity 'might work on some, and Fear on others: and those who had drawn the Guilt of 'his Blood upon them, were most particularly concern'd to examine the matter 'carefully, since Blood is apt to raise a Clamour within, which is not easily 'silenced: Besides, according to the *Acts of the Apostles*, the *Jews*, and even 'their *Sanhedrin*, seem to have been struck with the Reports of his Resurrection, so that they knew not how to gainsay it, and were concerned only 'to stifle and silence it. Now it seems somewhat unaccountable, how it 'came that they still stood out, and were not overcome with all that Evi'dence, if it was so full as we do now represent it? But in answer to this, it is to be considered, That there is a perverseness and depravedness in Humane Nature that cannot be accounted for. To some of the Enemies of our Religion, I mean the *Jews*, this can be no Objection, since *Pharaoh's hardning* himself against all *Moses's* Miracles and Messages, and even the murmurings of their Forefathers the *Israelites*, in the Wilderness, are every whit as extraordinary Instances of the depravation of Humane Nature, as these we now consider were: but indeed we need not go so far to seek for amazing Characters and Instances of the Madness of Mankind; no Laws, no Rewards, no Punishments, no Experience nor Observation can make Men wise

or

as good. When Men are once engaged in ill Courses, they quickly contract Habits, and are soon hardned in them; and when Pride and Interest are got on the side of that, which of it self was strong enough to overcome them, then they become intractable and fierce against every opposition, and become really the worse, the more they are pursued and dealt with.

64. Another Objection is, 'Why do not some of those Miracles that seem to have 'been with a sort of profusion thrown out abundantly at first, now appear to con- 'vince the World, for these would certainly have a great effect? What was said to the first Objection, belongs in a great measure to this. We are not to ask of God an account of his ways, if he has laid enough before us for our conviction; and if that is rejected by us, we have no reason to expect that he should disturb the Order that he has setled in the Creation, to gratifie our humours. It were not suitable to that Order, that he has so wisely and usefully establish'd, that it should be too often put out of its channel: It is enough that at the first openings of the Two Revealed Religions that he delivered to the World, he gave evident Signs, both of his Dominion over the Works of his Hands, and of his having authorised those whom he sent to speak in his Name. That being then fully done, and the Precepts of this Religion bearing such an apparent suitableness to our Natures, and to the Interests of all Humane Societies, there is no sort of reason for us to demand more proof, than that which God was pleas'd to give at first. Besides, that all Ages and Nations have the same pretended claim to Miracles, for they are equally his Creatures; and we can fancy no reason why he should be partial to some, more than to others: Now if there were such a constant return of Miracles, the whole Argument from them would in a little time be lost; Men grow accustomed to what they see daily, and it makes no impression, otherwise the Wonders of Day and Night, of Summer and Winter, the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, would work more powerfully on us, than they do. A superfetation of Miracles would have no effect, if it were not a bad one, to make the Divine Power in working them be called in question, and to lead Men to impute them to some Natural Cause, or to some Secrets known only to a few. In all which we may conclude, that according to what our Saviour said of *Moses* and the *Prophets*, If Men believe not Christ and his Apostles, they would not believe, *tho' a Man should rise from the dead*, or that the most uncontested Miracle that they would call for, should be wrought for their conviction. Luke 16. 31.

65. Another Objection of the *Infidels* is taken from the differences that are be- 'tween the Gospels, in which the same passages seem to be variously related in 'different words, and in another order of time; things being by some set down 'as done after those things before which they are set by others. Questions and 'Answers are variously stated; they also find some reasonings that do not seem 'concluding, even those that are brought to convince gainsayers, where there 'ought to be more exactness. There is also a lowness and flatness of style, 'that makes the Books seem but mean; nor are they laid in any exactness of 'method, but seem to run in a loose ramble; besides, that there are ma- 'ny passages in them that look staring, as that of Christ's preaching to the 'Spirits in Prison, that of *Melchisedeck*, and some other things that we scarce 'know what to make of. These things look not like the Products of Divine 'Inspiration.

But in anſwer to all this, we are to conſider the different Orders of Inſpira-
Numb. 12. 8. tion, according to the different ends for which it is given. *Moſes* had the *Law*, as the *Jews* confeſs, by an immediate Communication with God, as one Man converſes with another, expreſſed by the phraſe of *face to face*, or *mouth to mouth*; ſuch a degree ſeemed neceſſary for one who was to deliver an entire Syſtem of a Religion of Sacred Rites, as well as Binding Laws to that Nation. But thoſe who were only ſent to call on the People to the obedience of the Law, and to denounce Judgments upon their diſobedience, and give out Predictions, received a lower degree of Inſpiration; the Will of God being repreſented to them in Dreams and Viſions, in which ſeveral Repreſentations were dramatically impreſſed on their Imaginations, and explained by a ſecret Intimation made by God to them: Others had yet a lower degree, being animated by a Divine Excitation to compoſe Holy Hymns and Diſcourſes to the edification of the People: now as the *Jews* divide the Books of the *Old Teſtament* in three different Volumes, according to theſe various degrees of Inſpiration; according to which diviſion our Saviour himſelf cites the *Old Teſtament*; in all of which, we find that thoſe holy Penmen writ in ſuch a diverſity, that it is apparent every one was left to his own Way and Genius, as to Style and Compoſition, ſome being much loftier than others. Now to apply this to the *New Teſtament*; It was neceſſary that Men ſent to publiſh ſuch a Doctrine, ſhould be ſo divinely filled with the knowledge of it, and ſhould be ſo actuated by that ſame Influence that aſſiſted them miraculouſly, as neither to be able to miſtake, nor miſrepreſent any part of it; for the Miracles that they wrought, bringing the World under an obligation to believe them, it was not poſſible that they could be left to themſelves, and be ſubject to miſtakes: But after all this, every one acted according to his natural Temper, and writ in his natural Style; ſo we ſee a great variety in the whole Compoſition and Method of their Diſcourſes and Epiſtles. The Goſpels were writ either by Apoſtles, or by thoſe who were their companions in labour, and whoſe Books were authoris'd by them; but it does not clearly appear what method they intended to follow, whether to obſerve the order of Time, or the relation that one Paſſage might have to another: in this they were left to their natural Faculties; all that was of conſequence, was to have the Doctrine and Diſcourſes of Chriſt, his Actions and his Miracles, faithfully ſtated to us: but in the method of ordering or expreſſing theſe, they might be left to their natural Powers; and in this there might be a particular ordering of Providence, that every thing ſhould not be ſaid in the ſame way by every one as by concert, which might have looked liker a contrivance; it being more genuine, when different perſons write in different ways, and all agree in the ſame account of the Doctrine and Miracles. There may be alſo many ways of reconciling ſmall diverſities, which at this diſtance may be loſt to us: things may appear to be different, that yet may very well agree; of which we find innumerable Inſtances in Critical Authors: and thoſe paſſages whoſe agreement they have made out, give us very good reaſon to believe, that if we had a greater number of contemporary Books now extant, we might underſtand many more better than we can do in this want of them. Paſſages very like one another might have happened in different times of our Saviour's Life; and that which ſeems to be one ſtory, related two different ways, may be really two different ſtories, and both may be exactly related. So that all this Objection, inſtead of derogating from the credit of the Goſpel, does really heighten

heighten it. As for many Answers and Reasonings that do not seem to us to be very concluding, we are to consider, that in a short Relation, in which hints are only given, it was impossible to open every thing fully: we are also little acquainted with the methods of the *Jews* Arguings at that time. *Philo* and *Josephus* are the only Writers that remain. The one is short upon their Customs and Notions; and he affecting to write elegantly for the *Romans* and *Greeks*, gives us very little light this way. *Philo* does indeed much more; tho' living long at *Alexandria*, and studying the Greek Philosohpy, he is so mystical and sublime, that it is not easie always to comprehend him; yet in him we plainly see, how much the *Jews* were delighted with very dark allusions and reasonings: and since it is a just and allowable way of arguing with any, to argue from Suppositions granted by them, and suitably to their Principles and Notions, we who plainly see in *Philo*, that the *Jews* used them to explain a great deal of Scripture by a dark *Cabbala*, are not to wonder if some Arguments run in that strain. For instance, we do not see how the last words of the 102 Psalm, concerning God's creating all things, and his Eternity and Unchangeableness, belong to the Messias, which yet are applied to him in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; but we see clear Characters in that Psalm, to shew us that the *Jews* did so expound it; Since those words, *the Heathen shall fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory*; and *when the Lord shall build up Sion, he shall appear in his Glory*; together with several passages that follow, could not according to the *Cabbala* of the *Jews* be understood of any thing but of the Messias, and of the Divine *Shechinah*, that was to rest upon him, and so according to this all the other parts of the Psalm were also applicable to him. Heb. 1.10, 11,12. V.15,16.

If St. *Paul* argues, that the Promise was not made to *Seeds*, but to the *Seed* of *Abraham*, which seems a bad inference; since *Seed*, tho' in the singular, is yet of a plural signification; this may perhaps be bad *Greek*, unless some corrupt form of Speech had made *Seed* stand for *Son*; but tho' the *Greek* is not pure, yet the Sense is true, and the Argument in it self is good; St. *Paul*'s design being to let them see, that their being the *Seed* of *Abraham* alone, was not enough to assure them of the favour of God: It was not to all *Abraham*'s Posterity that the Promise was made, since neither *Ishmael* nor *Keturah*'s Children were comprehended within it: But it belonged only to *Isaac*; and in that contracting the Promise to one, an emblem was given of the Messias, in whom singly the blessing of that Covenant was to center, and was not to be spread into the whole Nation that descended from him. So that what fault soever we may find with the *Greek*, the Sense is true, and the Application is useful; and we do not know, but such a form of Speech might have been then used in common discourse. It is certain, that the Apostles had no Rhetorick, and often their Grammar is not exact: But this, instead of making against their Writings, does really make for them; since it shews, that they us'd no enticing Words, nor laboured Periods; no lively Figures, nor studied Sentences; all was natural, without Art or Study; which shewed that they knew they needed no borrowed help to support a Cause in which they were sure Heaven would interpose, and promote its own concerns; and the veneration with which their Writings were received, and in which they were held, shews that there was somewhat else than the Skill or Eloquence, the Persuasives or Arguings of the Authors, that begat and maintained their Reputation. Gal.3.16.

If

If we find here and there a Paſſage that we know not well what to make of, this is the fate of all Books that were writ at a great diſtance from us; The Cuſtoms and Manners of Men change ſtrangely in a courſe of many Ages; and all Speech, eſpecially that which is figurative and dark, has ſuch relation to theſe, that if in a Book full of many plain, uſeful and excellent Theories and Rules, ſome Paſſages come in amongſt them which we plainly ſee relate to ſome Practice or Opinion of which we are not ſufficiently informed, ſuch as the *being baptiſed for the dead*; *having power on the head becauſe of the Angels*, or the like: This is nothing but what occurs to us in all ancient Books, and what we eaſily bear with in all other Writings, even of a much later Antiquity: Weare therefore to make the beſt uſe we can of that which we do underſtand; and to let thoſe other places lie till we can find out their true meaning.

1 Pet. 3. 19. That of *Chriſt's going in the Spirit, to Preach to the Spirits now in Priſon*, is perhaps one of theſe, unleſs we believe that by *Priſon* is to be meant, according to the uſe of that word, and others like it in the Septuagint, the darkned ſtate of the Gentile World, who were ſhut up in Idolatry, as in a *Priſon*, or in *Chains*, under the power of the God of this World. In this ſenſe there is nothing eaſier to be apprehended than that period; which imports only, that Chriſt by vertue of the Holy Ghoſt that he had poured out upon his Apoſtles, was calling the Gentile World out of their Ignorance and Idolatry: And as in the days of *Noah*, thoſe who were diſobedient periſhed in the Flood, while there was an Ark prepared for thoſe who would go into it: So ſays he, our riſing out of the Waters, that being the laſt piece of the Baptiſmal Ceremony, as it was then practiſed, and being the repreſentation of our riſing again with Chriſt, was that which now *ſaves us*. In all this the ſence is clear and good, tho the manner of the expreſſion be a little dark.

Iſa. 61. 42. Iſa. 7. 49. Iſa. 9. 1, 2.

The way of all the Eaſterns, even to this day, in all their diſcourſes, being obſcure and involv'd, where a great deal is ſuppoſed to be already underſtood; we are not to wonder, if we ſhould find ſome parts of the *New Teſtament* writ in that ſtrain. As for that of *Melchiſedeck*, as the words lie, they ſeem to be a riddle indeed; but with a little obſervation we will find that paſſage concerning him in the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, to be as plain as any thing can be. The deſign of a great part of this Epiſtle is to ſhew, that the *Meſſias* was to be a *Prieſt*, and was to offer up a *Sacrifice*; but not to be of the Family of *Aaron*, ſince he was to ſpring out of the Tribe of *Judah*; nor to be a *Prieſt* after that *Order*, or according to the Rules of that Inſtitution; but according to the Pſalm, to be a *Prieſt* after the *Order of Melchiſedeck*: Now the Rules or Order of the *Aaronical* Prieſthood were, that every *Prieſt* was to be deſcended from that Line, to be born of a Mother that had not been a *Widow*, or *Divorced*; and this gave him who was thus received, a right to tranſmit his Prieſthood to his deſcendants in a Genealogy derived from him. Theſe *Prieſts* were alſo tied to their Turns in attending on the Temple, which were called their *Days*, in which they were admitted to ſerve at Thirty, which was therefore the Age of the beginning of their days; and at Fifty they were diſmiſſed and were no more bound to attend, than if they had been naturally dead; ſo this was the end of their *Life*, as to their Prieſthood. Now in oppoſition to this, *Melchiſedeck* was *a Prieſt without Father and Mother*; that is, He was immediately called to it of

Heb. 6. 20. Heb. 7. 3. Pſalm, 110 4. Lev. 21. 7, 13. 14.

God

God; and it did not devolve on him by descent, nor was he to derive this in a Genealogy to his Posterity: He came not on to an attendance on the service of God at such an Age, nor went he out at another, but was *a Priest of God for ever*; that is, of a long continuance, according to the common use of that word, which only imports a constancy in any thing. *Melchisedeck* was a Priest for term of Life, which answers the signification of the word; but was a Type of him that in the strictest sense was to be *a Priest of God for ever*. Thus if we conster that verse by a reverse, which is very ordinary, of bringing the last word to govern the whole period, placing the word *Priest* at the head of it; nothing can be plainer and more full to the point that is there driven at. And thus many passages that appear difficult, when they are but slightly looked at, become very intelligible when more attentively examined; and as we can make this out in a great many Instances; so if there are others in which we do still stick, we have all possible reason to impute our Ignorance to our wanting a sufficient number of helps, and of Books writ in that Countrey, and at that time, from which we might better collect the Opinions, Customs, Phrases and Allusions of those Parts and Times: For since the Books of our Religion were writ for the use of plain and simple People, to whom they were addrest, and in whose hands they were to be put; they must have been writ in a popular, and not in a Rhetorical or Philosophical Style; which tho it is more correct and more lasting, yet it is both drier and more laboured, and shews always more of Art than of Nature.

I have now gone over all the Heads that I thought necessary to make this discourse full in all its parts: I have left nothing behind me that seemed to be material: I have not been afraid to lay open all the secrets of Infidelity, with the utmost strength that I could ever find them urged in; because I was fully satisfied in my own mind, that I could answer them all. There is only one particular remaining, which I have reserved to the last place, because it affords a proper conclusion to this Discourse. 'One of the main things in which *In-*'*fidels* support themselves, is, that tho they speak out, yet let others deny or 'disguise their Thoughts as much as they please, either out of Interest or Mo-'desty, since their Doctrine has an ill sound in the World; yet they think 'with them, because they live with them, and not according to the Doctrine 'which they espouse: and they seem to conclude with some advantage, That 'we collect what men think, much more infallibly from what they do, than 'from what they say; And this they urge with much Malice; And would to God that I could add with as much injustice against too many of our selves; Whose arguings upon these Heads are so much the less to be regarded than other Mens, because we have espoused the Cause, and have made it our own, both in point of Reputation and Interest: I wish and pray that we may all resolve on the only effectual Confutation of which this is capable, by setting such a patern to the World, and leading such exemplary Lives, that in these they may see how firmly we believe that to which we endeavour to persuade others, who wait for our halting, and are critical in observing our failings, and malicious in aggravating them. It gave the chief strength to the first Apologies that were made for Christianity, that they durst appeal to the Lives of the Christians, to give the World a right Idea of their Doctrine; whereas we must now decline that Argument, and appeal from the Lives of Christians to their Doctrines: Yet whersoever numbers embrace any thing, there must especially

cially in a course of many Ages, follow upon it a great declining from what was while they were fewer in number, and that the thing was newer and fresher upon their Thoughts. Besides, that the best Christians are those who are the least known, their Modesty and Humility leading them to hide their best Actions; whereas those who make the most noise, and the greatest show, are for the most part hot or designing Men. A Man may also be really a much better Man than one would take him to be, that sees him only on one side, and does not know him wholly.

The frailties of some Mens natures will hang heavy upon them, and sometimes burst out even in scandalous instances, notwithstanding all their principles and struglings to the contrary: Therefore upon the whole matter, tho we cannot deny but that there is too much truth in this prejudice, yet it is but a prejudice, and cannot bear much weight: So that it is a most unaccountable piece of folly to venture Mens Souls and their eternal Concerns upon a reflection, that as it is not generally true, so has no solidity in it: Yet after all, the use that we ought to make of it is, that we ought to frame our own Lives, and the Lives of all that are in our Power, as much as may be to a Conformity to our Doctrines, that so the World may observe in us such a true and unaffected course of solid Vertue and useful Piety, that we may again recover that Argument, which we have too much lost, for the truth and beauty of our Religion, from the Lives of those who believe and practise it; and that so the *Apologies* now writ, which in all other respects are the strongest that ever were, may again have their full perfection, and their entire effect upon the World.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

Concerning the

Divinity and Death

OF

CHRIST.

THE main Articles of the Christian Religion, as it is distinguished from all other Religions, are those which relate to the Person and Sufferings of Christ; and therefore it is of the last importance for us to have our Notions concerning these, right and truly stated: and that the rather, because in the Age in which we live, the laughing at every thing that is resolved into a Mystery, passes for a piece of Wit, and has the Character of a free and inquisitive Mind. And while some would have every thing taken for a Mystery, others set their strength to the decrying of every thing that is proposed as such, as if that were an Imposition upon Human Nature, and the bringing Mankind under a Yoke that it cannot and ought not to bear.

Therefore, that I may treat of this Matter in a proper method, and with a due clearness, I shall first in general consider this Prejudice against all Mysteries; and when I have thus prepared my way, I shall come to the consideration of those which I intend now to treat upon. *Mystery* in its first and common signification, stood for some Sacred Rites by which Men were initiated into any form of Religion, which the Priests of corrupt Religions kept as *Secrets*, that either they might by that concealment, encrease the value of them, which if they had been generally known, might have appeared so slight and mean, as to have become contemptible, or that they might hide some Immoralities or Frauds in the management of them; and all those Theories which were kept up from the Herd, and only communicated to confiding persons, were also given out under this Name, as things known only to those that were initiated.

In this ſenſe there is no ſecret in Chriſtianity, no hidden Rites, nor concealed Doctrines that are not truſted to the whole body of Chriſtians. But by an extent of the uſe of this word, it came to be applied among the Chriſtians of the firſt Ages, to thoſe Holy Rites of our Religion that were Inſtituted by our Saviour, and which they alſo called *Sacraments*; becauſe in thoſe, the Vows that tie us to God in this Religion, were both made and renewed: The Venerable Truths of this Faith, and Secrets then made publick, were alſo by S. *Paul* expreſſed by this Name, which as it is now commonly underſtood, ſignifies ſome Theory, or point of Doctrine that we believe; becauſe we are perſuaded that it is revealed to us in Scripture, tho' we cannot diſtinctly apprehend how it can be; and that in the common view which is offered concerning it, it ſeems to contradict our common Notions.

In this ſenſe it is oppoſed by many, who ſay, 'There can be no ſuch thing 'in Religion; that every thing of which we can form no diſtinct Idea, is no-'thing to us, and that we cannot believe it: ſince we can only believe that of 'which we have ſome thought; God having made us reaſonable Creatures, 'cannot intend that we ſhould act contrary to our Natures; and believing any 'thing contrary to our apprehenſions, ſeems to be a flat contradiction to our 'faculties; and it is a queſtion, whether thoſe who plead for Myſteries, can be-'lieve themſelves, after all their Zeal for them: ſince a Man can no more think 'that to be true, of which he has no Idea, than a Man can ſee in the dark; for 'let him affirm ever ſo much that he ſees, all other perſons who perceive it to 'be dark, are ſure that he ſees nothing. It ſeems to be the peculiar Character 'and Beauty of the Chriſtian Religion, that it is our *reaſonable ſervice*, or the '*Rational* way of Worſhipping God: and therefore thoſe who would propoſe 'it as containing Myſteries, under a pretence of magnifying it, do rather leſſen 'it, and give advantages to the Enemies of it to expoſe it on that account. For 'upon this ſuppoſition of there being ſome *Myſteries* in it, thoſe who corrupt 'it, ſeem to have a ground given them for raiſing a much greater ſuper ſtructure, 'and for ſilencing all objections againſt their unconceivable Doctrines, with 'this word *Myſtery*, which being ſo apt to be abuſed and carried too far, ſeems 'to give a juſt prejudice againſt it: upon this ground they conclude, that we 'are to believe nothing but that which we can diſtinctly apprehend: and that if 'any word or expreſſion in Scripture ſeeme to import any other thing, we 'muſt ſoften theſe to a ſenſe agreable to our faculties, but that we ought ne-'ver to yield to a ſenſe that is unconceivable; which as they argue, is ſtill 'nothing to us.

This is the Foundation of their Reaſonings: and upon this it is that they juſtify or excuſe ſome expoſitions that ſeem forced and unnatural: for they ſay, they are ſure they are not to be underſtood in the Myſterious ſenſe, becauſe of this general Theory; and therefore they muſt give them the beſt ſenſe that they can find that is ſuited to their Principles. Upon the right ſtating of this, the whole matter turns; and becauſe this whole Speculation is urged to much worſe purpoſes by *Atheiſts* and *Deiſts*, it will be neceſſary to conſider it carefully.

It is certain we can apprehend nothing, but as our faculties repreſent it to us, no more than we can ſee Sounds, or hear Colours: it is alſo certain, that we can receive nothing that contradicts our faculties: for let a Man ſtrain for it as much as he will, he cannot believe that any thing both is, and is not at the ſame time;

time; or that two and three do not make five, and neither more nor less. The objects of sense do also determine us; for when we see a thing clearly before us, we cannot force our selves to think, or so much as to doubt that we see it not. But after all, there are many things which we believe upon the report of others, or upon the Consequences of our own Observation, that seem to be so far out of our own reach, that our faculties cannot easily receive them: For instance, let us make a discourse of *light*, and of *seeing*, to a *Blind-man*: Let us tell him, that a vast Globe, called the Sun, which as he feels, creates a great heat in the Air at some Hours, in some Seasons of the Year, gives such pushes to infinite numbers of small parts of matter, that they are upon that put in a vast motion; and that as these strike upon every resisting body, and recoil from it, they carry in them some mould of its figure and bigness; and of another thing too called *Colour*, of which he can frame no sort of Notion; and that these in this motion, striking upon that which he can feel to, which is his *Eye*, do go through it, and enter at a small passage; that is, in a second Coat of his Eye, which an Anatomist may make him feel to: and within it, as they have passed through those humours that he can also feel, those small movers do at last so strike against the most inward Coat, that from thence a Man may know the figure, matter, bigness, and distance, of such objects as the blind Man can only feel to, and that a great many Miles of; and that with one glance of his Eye, he can see many Millions of objects at once, and be able to judge concerning them, and concerning their distance from him, and from one another, a great way off: and that he can see the Sun and Stars, tho' distant from us many Millions of Millions of Miles. Now tho' it is to be confessed, that a blind Man can form no true Idea of all this, yet he may be bound to believe it, not only from the testimony of all seeing Men, but from his own observation: for by setting a Man at a considerable distance from him, and holding up towards him all such things as he knows by feeling, he by the other Man's answers may perceive plainly that he knows them, tho' he not only cannot apprehend how this is done, but seems to raise whole Schemes of Impossibilities against it. But to give another Instance of this, that will be more universally sensible; let a Man practis'd in Geometry, shew a Clown a small Quadrant, and tell him that by it he can measure the Compass of the whole Earth, and the distance between the Earth and the Heavenly Orbs: he will laugh at him as a boasting vain Man, or one that intends to impose upon his credulity: but if this Mathematician will, to convince him, take the heigt of any Building, or Precipice that he can measure; the Clown, when he finds that the Observation agrees with the length of his Plumbline, is somewhat convinced, and is apt to think, either that the two Stations, and the Computations which he saw him make on Paper, were Magical Spells, or that he has a Method that leads him to this by degrees of which he himself is utterly ignorant: so by all this it is plain, that a Man may be bound from some Authorities and Observations, to believe some things of which he not only has no Notion, but fancies he has very clear ones to the contrary.

From hence I will make another step to shew, that indeed we believe almost every thing that we do believe, under the like difficulties and disadvantages: for Instance, we know that we move, and yet there is something very like a demonstration against Motion; let A. move from B. to C. two supposed contiguous Points in a supposed Instant D. A. when it moves, is supposed to

be in B. so in that Instant it cannot go to C. because it is supposed to be in B. and it cannot be in the same Instant both in B. and C. for then it should be in two places at once, that is, in the same Instant; therefore in the Instant in which it is in B. it cannot go to C. and so it cannot do it in any other Instant, because it is still supposed to be in B. When a Man has turned this over and over in his Thoughts, he is indeed very sure that it is false, and is very certain that he moves; yet he feels a contradiction to that in his reasoning, from which it is not so easy for him to free himself, as he might at first view apprehend.

This of Motion carries me on to a greater difficulty, whether there are vacuities in Nature, or not; that is, distances between Bodies in which there is no sort of Body at all. It is very hard to apprehend how things can be either of these ways. Motion it self, Condensation and Rarefaction, Weight, and the crouding of all things to the Centre, can hardly be explained without admitting a *Vacuum*. And yet as our thoughts cannot receive the Idea of it; so the whole connexion of things, the whole Chain of Matter, and the Communication of Motion from the Heavenly Orbs down to us, is all broken and interrupted; nor can we see how the Frame of Nature can hold together, if a *Vacuum* is once allowed. So that tho' we are certain that either it is, or it is not; yet when one weighs well the difficulties of both Hypotheses, he is so equally ballanced, that he is apt to lean against that whose difficulties were the last, and are the freshest in his thoughts. If from this we go into the Compositions of Matter, we are sure that either it is divisible on to Infinity, and that there are no Indivisible Points in it; or that it has Points, either such as have no Parts, or extended Atoms that may have Parts, but that are Indiscernible. It must be one or other of these that must be true: for they may be reduc'd to the terms of a Contradiction, since either Matter is divisible into Infinity, or not; if not, then either those Indivisibles have parts, or they have not: So that it is plain one of them must be true; and yet every one who has gone through that famous question, must see that there are such Insuperable difficulties against every one of them, that they seem to amount to a demonstration.

I shall Instance but in one other particular, which though it is that of all others that we should understand the best; yet carries no fewer nor less difficulties in it, and that is our own Composition. We plainly perceive that we think, and that we act freely: Then either this rises out of meer Matter, or we have another principle in us of another nature and order of beings, that thinks and moves, both it self and also our Bodies. That meer Matter can have no liberty, and that it cannot think, seems to be evident of it self; all our Observations of Matter shew it to be passive, and to act necessarily, and that it neither has in it self a power of motion, nor liberty, but always goes in a Chain: and *thought* being perceived by us to be one simple act, it must flow from a single principle that is uncompounded: but on the other hand, what should Chain down such a subtile being, into so gross a one as body; and how a thought should move it, or how the motions of Matter should affect the thinking-principle; how they should give it either pleasure or pain; how the mind should be furnished from the body with such Images and Figures, by which it remembers, imagines, argues and speaks; how these should be so subtile, and yet stick so long, and lie in such order, are things that the more a Man dwells upon them, and spreads them out before himself, he not only comprehends them the less,

less, but seems to find such difficulties against them, that he is lost, and knows not what to think of himself. When a thinking man lays all these, and a great many more, which will arise from these hints, if he has a mind to look for them, together, they shew him how limited our faculties are, how little able we are to dive into the nature of things; and that we can much more easily raise difficulties, than solve them. Yet the use that I plead for in all this is, neither to lead men to be sceptical, and believe nothing, nor to be too implicite to believe every thing: but only to evince this, That we may be bound either from our own Observation, or upon the Authority of other Persons, to believe some things, of which we are not able to give our selves a distinct account, nor to answer the objections that may lie against them.

Great difference is to be made between the believing a thing, and the apprehending the manner of it. If we have sufficient Authority to guide our Belief, it will be no just objection against it, that the manner of it cannot be explained: And this is yet more evidently true, if the Being in which a thing is proposed to our Belief is of an Order and Rank above us; and most of all, if it is infinitely above us. We perceive in the gradations of our own being, that a Child is not capable of those Thoughts which he himself will come to have when he is more ripened: And a man of low Education cannot frame those apprehensions which are easy to those who are born and bred in better circumstances. If then the difference of Age and Education make thoughts that are plain and easy to some, seem unconceivable to others; this ought, when applied to the Divine Essence, make us conclude, that there may be Mysteries in that Being, of infinite Perfection and Elevation above us, far beyond all our apprehensions: And therefore, if God lets out any hints of any such to us, we are to receive them in such a plain sense as the words do naturally bear: And if this should happen to import that which does not at all agree with our Conceptions of other things, we ought not to wrest it to another sense that seems easier to us.

We can frame no distinct Idea of that Infinite Essence, and it were not Infinite if we could. How things were made out of nothing, is above our reach; how it thinks, is an amazing difficulty, whether its Acts are, as is commonly believed, one with the Essence, or distinct from it. This Essence having necessary Existence in its first Conception, those free Acts that might not have been, are not easily apprehended to be one with his Essence; and if those Acts are said not to be free, then all things exist by the same necessity by *which* God exists; for if the *Immanent* Acts of God are one with his Essence, then since all the *Transient* Acts do certainly follow his *Immanent* ones, there is an Universal Necessity equally spread over the whole frame of Nature; and God can do nothing otherwise than he does: But if those Acts of God are different from his Essence, and distinct from it, such as our Thoughts are; then here are Accidents in God, and a succession of Thoughts, which seem inconsistent with infinite Perfection, that is, all one Eternal and Unchangeable Act. Here is a difficulty that perhaps few reflect on; but it is every whit as great and as unaccountable as any of the Mysteries of Revealed Religion can be pretended to be; tho this arises out of Natural Religion. If to this we add all that we believe concerning the Attributes of God, his being every where, his knowing every thing, his Providence in governing all things, together with those unsearchable Methods in which it exerts it self; we must acknowledge that *he*

dwells

dwells in a Light to which we cannot approach: But that as the present frame of our Bodies, and structure of our Eyes, cannot bear the looking stedfastly on the Sun, or the being brought much neater him, of which yet we may be capable in another texture of our Eyes and Bodies; so in this state in which we have narrow Notions, and gross Imaginations, we are not able to frame distinct Ideas even of those Attributes of God, of which we make no doubt, but yet we find such difficulties in apprehending them, that they do blind and confound us, and put us to a stand in all our thinkings about them: But for all that we still go on, believing firmly those his Attributes.

In fine, We are to make a great difference between those plain perceptions we have either of the objects of sense, or of simple Theories, and the difficulties and deductions that belong to them: The one is the voice of our Faculties, and we cannot oppose it, or believe against it, because it is in some sort the voice of God within us, since it is the natural result of those powers that he has put in us; but it is quite another thing when we go to Inferences, and to frame difficulties. In this appears our Ignorance of the nature of things, of the several ways and manners in which they may operate, and of the Consequences that seem to belong to them; because we are apt to judge of every Being by our selves, and have not extent enough of thought and observation to reason always true, or to judge exactly: So that this must be setled as a clear difference between plain perceptions, and a train of Consequences; we are always to be determined by the one, but not by the other. To instance it then in that which is now before us; we have a plain perception, that no Being can be both One and Three in the same respect, because we are sure that is a plain Contradiction, which cannot possibly be true; but if a thing is represented as both One and Three, this in different respects may be true.

Thus I have dispatched this first part, in which it seemed the more necessary to state this matter aright, that so it may appear, that no part of the plea for Mysteries, belongs to Transubstantiation, since here is the fullest evidence of sense, in an object of sense, which plainly represents to us *Bread* and *Wine* to be still the same after Consecration, that they were before; and therefore we can never be certain of any thing, if in this case we are bound to believe in contradiction to such a plain and simple perception; but this is not at all applicable to any speculations concerning the Divine Nature.

I go on from this Previous Discourse, to the Subject it self that I am now upon; in which there have been three different Opinions: the one is, That Christ was a Divine Person, miraculously conceived, and wonderfully qualified for revealing the Will of God to the World; which he did in so excellent a manner, and set so perfect a pattern both in his Life and Death, that in Reward of that, God has given him the Government of the World; putting the Divine Authority in him, and commanding him to be Worshipped and Acknowledged as God, and has subjected both Angels and Men to him; tho he had no Existence before he was formed in the Virgin's Womb, and no other nature but that which he derived from his Miraculous Conception.

Others have thought that there was an Essence created by God before all Worlds, by which he made and governs all things, and that this Essence which was like God, dwelt in *Christ Jesus*, and was by the Gospel revealed to the World: So that all were bound to honour and obey him. Some of these called him a Being of a Nature quite *different from*, and *unlike* the Divine Nature; which was found

found to be of an unacceptable Sound; so others softned it by saying, that he was of an Essence *like the Father*: But this was only a milder way of speaking, since if this Being was created, so that once it was not, its nature must be essentially *unlike* the Father; for sure nothing can be more unlike, than created and uncreated. And by *Likeness*, such Men could only understand a Moral Likeness of imitation and resemblance; so that he might be *like God*, as we are called to be *like him*, tho' in vastly higher degrees.

The 3*d*. Opinion is, That the Godhead, by the Eternal *Word*, the Second in the Blessed Three, dwelt in, and was so inwardly united to the Human Nature of *Jesus Christ*, that by vertue of it, God and Man were truly one Person, as our Soul and Body make one Man. And that this Eternal *Word* was truly God, and as such is worshipped and adored as the proper Object of Divine Adoration. By those of this Perswasion, the Name *Person* came to be applied to the *Three*, which the Scripture only calls by the Names of *Father*, *Son*, or *Word*, and *Holy Ghost*, on design to discover those who thought that these *Three* were only different names of the same thing: But by *Person* is not meant such a Being as we commonly understand by that word, *a compleat intelligent Being, distinct from every other Being*: but only that every one of that blessed *Three*, has a peculiar distinction in himself, by which he is truly different from the other two.

This is the Doctrine that I intend now to explain to you. When I say *Explain*, I do not mean, that I will pretend to tell you how this is to be understood, and in what respect these *Persons* are believed to be *One*, and in what respects they are *Three*. By explaining a *Mystery*, can only be meant the shewing how it is laid down and revealed in Scripture; for to pretend to give any further account of it, is to take away its Mysteriousness, when the manner how it is in it self is offered to be made intelligible. In this too many both Ancients and Moderns have perhaps gone beyond due bounds; while some were pleased with the Platonical Notions of *Emanations*, and a Fecundity in the Divine Essence: For we have footsteps of a Tradition as Ancient, even among *Heathens*, as any we can trace up, which limited the Emanations to *Three*: And these thought there was a *Production*, or rather an *Eduction* of two out of the first: In the same manner that some Philosophers thought that Souls were propagated from Souls; and the figure by which this was explain'd, being that of one Candle's being lighted at another; this seems to have given the rise to those words, *Light of Light*. It is certain, many of the Fathers fell often into this conceit, and in this way of explaining this matter, they have said many things which intimate that they believed an inequality between the Persons and a Subordination of the Second and Third to the First: So that by the *same Substance or Essence*, they do in many places express themselves as if they only meant the same Being in a general Sense, as all human Souls are of the same *Substance*; that is, the same order or sort of Beings; and they seemed to entitle them to different operations; not only in an Oeconomical way, but thought that one did that which the other did not. This was indeed more easily to be apprehended; but it seemed so directly to assert Three Gods, which was very contrary to many most express Declarations both in the *Old* and *New Testament*, in which the Unity of the Deity is so often held forth, that therefore others took another way of explaining this; making it their Foundation, that the Deity was one Numerical Being. They then observed, that the

the Sun, beſides his own Globe, had an Emanation of Light, and another of Heat, which had different Operations, and all from the ſame Eſſence; and that the Soul of Man had both Intellection and Love, which flowed from its Eſſence: So they conceiv'd that the primary Act of the Divine Eſſence, was its *Wiſdom*, by which it ſaw all things, and in which, as in an *inward Word*, it deſigned all things: This they thought might be called the *Son*, as being the *Generation* of the Eternal Mind; while from the Fountain-Principle, together with this inward *Word*, there did ariſe a *Love* that was to iſſue forth, and that was to be the Soul of the Creation, and was more particularly to animate the Church: And in this *Love*, all things were to have Life and Favour. This was reſted on, and was afterwards dreſſed up with a great deal of dark nicety by the Schools, and grew to be the Univerſally received Explanation: Tho many have thought, that the term *Son*, did not at all belong to the Bleſſed *Three*, but only to our Saviour, as he was the *Meſſias*; the *Jews* having had that Notion of the *Meſſias*, that as he was to be the King of *Iſrael*, ſo he was to be the *Son of God*: We find *Nathanael* addreſſed himſelf thus to him; and when the High-Prieſt adjur'd our Saviour to tell if he was the *Meſſias*, he knits theſe two together, *Art thou the Chriſt the Son of the moſt High God?* which ſhews, that they did eſteem theſe two as one and the ſame thing. Now ſome Criticks do apprehend, that ſince in many places the term *Son of God*, has manifeſtly a relation to Chriſt as the *Meſſias*; there is in this an Uniformity in the whole Scripture Style, ſo that every where by the phraſe *Son of God*, we are to underſtand *Jeſus*, as the *Meſſias*, in which the human Nature being the firſt Conception, they conceive that all the places importing an Inferiority of the *Son* to the *Father*, have no difficulty in them, ſince they are only to be underſtood of *Jeſus* as the *Meſſias*; but that the Divine Principle that was in him, is in the ſtrictneſs of Speech to be called as St. *John* does, *the Word*. So that by this, if true, all the Speculations concerning an Eternal Generation, are cut off in the ſtrict ſenſe of the words, tho in a larger ſenſe every emanation of what ſort ſoever, may be ſo called. Theſe, and a great deal more of this kind that might be further branched out, and enlarged upon, are the Explanations that Divines have offered at upon this Myſtery. But it may be juſtly queſtioned, whether by theſe they have either made it to be better underſtood, or to be more firmly believed; or whether others have not taken advantage to repreſent thoſe ſubtilities as dregs, either of *Æones* of the *Valentinians*, or of the Platonical Notions; which laſt being in ſo high and juſt a Reputation among the *Greeks*, it is plain, that many of the Ancients thought it was no ſmall ſervice to the Chriſtian Religion, to ſhew a great Affinity between it and *Plato's* Theology: and it being long before theſe Theories were well ſtated and ſetled, it is no wonder if many of the Fathers have not only differed from one another, but even from themſelves in ſpeaking upon this Argument. While men go about to explain a thing of which they can frame no diſtinct *Idea*, it is very natural for them to run out into a vaſt Multiplicity of words; into great length, and much darkneſs and confuſion. Many improper Similies will be urged, and often impertinent reaſonings will be made uſe of. All which are the unavoidable Conſequences of a man's going about to explain to others that which he does not diſtinctly underſtand himſelf.

This in general is the ſum of the Received Doctrine, That as there is but *One God*, ſo in that undivided Eſſence, there are *Three* that are really different from

from one another, and are more than only three Names, or three outward Oeconomies, and that the *Second* of these was in a most intimate and unconceivable manner united to a perfect Man; so that from the Human and Divine Nature thus united, there did result the *Person of the Messias*, who was both *God* and *Man*.

Here new Subtilties have been found out, to state the formal Notion of a *Person*, which was supposed to consist in a special *Subsistence*, so that it has been thought, that the Human Nature in *Christ*, had no special *Subsistence* of its own, tho it was not easy to explain this Notion; since if *Subsistence* belonged to the Human Nature, it might seem that it was not perfect, if it had not a proper *Subsistence*. A Hypostatical Union was proposed as a term fit to explain this by, that is to say, the Human Nature was believed to subsist by the *Subsistence* of the Word; but it was not easy to make this the more intelligible, by offering a Notion full as unintelligible as it self, to explain it by. Tho indeed this is a point, in which it is more possible for us to arrive at distinct Ideas, or somewhat very like them, than the other. We plainly see, that the Union of our Souls to our Bodies, consists in a Harmony that God has setled between such an Organization of matter, and such Sensations that arise out of the different motions of this Matter so organiz'd: Upon which this Matter is in many things under the power of the Mind, which by its thoughts commands and moves it, and it has from it a continual Influence and Actuation that is called *Life*; so that the Union of the Soul and Body is the result of such a proper Harmony of the Body, according to the Mechanical Structure of its necessary parts, as makes it fit to give proper Sensations to the Mind, and to receive and obey the Impressions of the Mind, the breaking of which Harmony brings on death.

From hence we may apprehend several degrees of the Union of thinking being with Matter: The lowest, is that if Infants, where there is a thought, but a thought so entirely under the Impressions of Matter, that it is not able to rise above them, and either to think of any thing else, or to stop the Violence of these Impressions: So here is a Spirit wholly immersed in Matter, that is in every thing under its dominion, and is a slave to it; and in this state Ideots continue their whole life long. A second degree is that of men in this Life duly ripened, in which their Minds are as to their Sensations still subject to Matter; that is, they must feel pain or pleasure, according to the dispositions of Matter; but then there is a power in the Soul to govern Matter, and not to yield to those Sensations: So that there is a lasting struggle between the Sensations that arise from the Body, and the Cogitations that spring in the Mind, which have the better of one another by turns. Here the Soul and Body are as it were equally yoked together, only the Soul may by the use of Reason and Liberty be so assisted, as to have the ascendant over the Body for the greatest part.

From these we may conceive two other degrees of Union, which may be between Souls and Bodies. The one is a State in which the Soul shall have an entire Authority over Matter, but yet shall need the assistance of it, as a necessary mean of Motion, and as having in it a repository of Images and Figures, for memory and imagination: So that in such a state, the Body shall have no power at all over the Mind, but shall only serve it as Instruments do a Mechanick; and this seems to be a Philosophical Notion of the use that our Bodies

ſhall be of to us in another State; in which they ſhall be no more clogs upon us, to give us uneaſy or grievous ſenſations, but ſhall only be the proper Machines for Motion and Memory, and for ſuch like uſes, in which the Body when well tuned can ſerve the Mind. A Fourth degree may be a State in which a Mind may be ſo entirely perfect in its ſelf, and in its own acts, that it may have no need of a Body upon its own account, but only in order to the miniſtring to another Spirit that is yet under the power of Matter, to give it either Warnings, or Aſſiſtances; which perhaps it cannot communicate, but through the Conveyance, or by the Mechanical Motions and Impreſſions of one piece of Matter upon another. Upon this account, and for this end, Spirits of the higheſt form, nay God himſelf, may at ſome times, and for ſome unknown ends, make uſe of a Body, and put it in ſuch a form, and ſo actuate it, as thereby to communicate ſome Light or Influence to minds that are yet much immerſed in Matter. Theſe are all the ways that we can apprehend of a Mind's aſſuming Matter, and being united to it, which is the having it under its Actuation, or Authority; ſo that the Acts of the Mind give ſuch Impreſſions to the Body, as govern and command it. By the ſame way of thinking, we may apprehend yet more eaſily, how one Spirit may be united to another; which is, when a ſuperior Spirit has another of an Inferior Order ſo entirely under its conduct and Impreſſions, that the Inferior receives conſtant Communications of Light and Impulſe from the Superior: And as the Body lives by the preſence of the Soul, even when it does not by any diſtinct Act work upon it, or enliven it; ſo a ſuperior Mind may have a perpetual conduct of an inferior, even when it leaves it to its own liberty, and does not break in upon it by any immediate enlightning or animating of it. And thus we may conceive the *Subſiſtence* of an Intelligent Being to be its acting entirely in it ſelf, or upon Matter united to it, without any other Spirit's being conſtantly preſent to it, actuating it, or having it under any immediate Vital and inſeparable Influence. This ſeems to give ſome light towards the *Idea* of a *Subſiſtence*, as ſeparated from the *Eſſence*, and by conſequence, of one perſon's Subſiſtence in, by, and from another. I do not pretend to ſay, that this is the ſtrict Notion of *Subſiſtence*, but it is the neareſt thing that I can imagine to it, which will at leaſt help to form ſome general *Idea* of it; for theſe being all the diſtinct Notions that we can frame of the Union of Spirits to other Spirits, or of Spirits to Matter, they will help us to a more diſtinct Apprehenſion of the Union of the Eternal *Word* to a Human Nature, by which it aſſumed the *Man* into ſuch an inward and immediate Oeconomy, that it did always actuate, illuminate and conduct him, as we perceive our Souls do our Bodies.

This is the cleareſt thought that we give our ſelves of that Human Nature's ſubſiſting by the *Subſiſtence* of the *Word* that dwelt in it. This alſo agrees well with the Expreſſions of the *Word's dwelling in Fleſh*, and of the *bodily Indwelling* of the *Fulneſs of the Godhead* in *Chriſt Jeſus*. But having now ſhewed how far theſe things may become in ſome ſort intelligible to us, I go to my main Deſign, which is to examine no longer, whether this ought to be believed or not, in caſe we ſhould find it very expreſly affirmed in the *New Teſtament*, for I hope I have already made that out fully: Therefore the only queſtion that now lies before me, is, Whether this is contained in the *New Teſtament*, or not? for if it is in it, and is a part of its Doctrine, then ſince that Doctrine

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is proved to be all true, and revealed by God, this must be likewise true, if it is a part of it. This I will also yield, That Authorities brought to prove Articles that are so sublime as to rise above our ways of Apprehension, ought to be made out by a greater fulness of express Proofs, and bare Precepts of Morality, or more easily received Notions; for as among men, every thing requires a proportion'd degree of proof, as it is more or less credible of it self: So in Religion, we ought not to suppose, that if God intended to reveal any thing to us, that should pass our Understandings, he would only do it in hints or in words, and in expressions of doubtful signification; therefore I yield, that those who deny *Mysteries*, have a right to demand full, express and copious proofs of them. I will therefore only dwell upon those proofs that are very comprehensive, and will not rest upon single passages, which I leave to Books of Controversy or Criticism, in which they are fully opened and made out: My not using these, is not from the distrust that is in them, but I intend to lay this matter before you, in some observations that take in a great deal, and that if they are true, do give a clearer Light, and a more unquestioned Authority to single passages, since those agree with the frame of the whole.

I need not spend many words to prove, that the main Design of Revealed Religion, was to drive all Idolatry out of the World, either the worshipping of other Gods besides the true, or the worshipping the True God under a Bodily Representation. This is so expresly set out by *Moses*, and so much insisted on, and prosecuted by the *Prophets*, that it will admit of no dispute; nor is there any made about it. To guard this Capital Article of Religion, God, when he sent *Moses* to be the Deliverer and the Lawgiver of the *Jews*, gave himself a particular Name that was to be peculiar to himself; so that the Kings or false Gods might be called by the other Names of the Deity, yet this was never given to any of them. The *Old Testament* being put in *Greek* by the *Jews*, the Name *Jehovah* was throughout Translated by them Κύριος. I do not insist upon the Article being prefixed to it; for tho it is so very often, yet I am convinced that there is no arguing from that, since there is such variety in the use of it. Now the *Greek* Translation of the *Old Testament* being that which was the most read and us'd by the *Jews* in our Saviour's time, in the whole Phraseology of their Sacred reading, Κύριος and *Jehovah* were one and the same thing. The Authors of the *New Testament*, as they were *Jews* by Birth and Education, so they offered the Gospel first to the *Jews*. In all that they writ, we see plainly that they had them in their eye, either to convince them, or at least to answer their Prejudices and Objections. And it is certain, that how much soever that Nation was Anciently bent to Idolatry, they were ever after the time of the *Maccabees* so entirely cured of it, that they could not bear any approaches to it, or shadow of it. Yet the Apostles through the whole *New Testament* call our Saviour by the Name of Κύριος; sometimes he is called *Lord*, or the *Lord*, that is, with or without the Article, and that simply without any Addition; sometimes *my Lord*, or *our Lord*; but most frequently the *Lord Jesus Christ*, or *Jesus Christ our Lord*: These indeed return so often, especially in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in the *Epistles*, that they could not be all copi'd out in many pages. Now this being so Sacred a Name to the *Jews*, it is impossible to imagine that the Apostles coul dintend other in it, but that the *Jehovah* dwelt so immediately and bodily in *Christ Jesus*, that by that Indwelling he was truly *Jehovah*. This will be more evident, if we consider the Glorious

Appearance of God in the Holy of Holies, in which there was a Cloud, and within the Cloud a *Glory* that did often ſhine out, to ſhew an acceptation of their Sacrifices and Prayers, or to give particular Anſwers, when the Holy Prieſt came with the Urim in the Breaſt-plate to conſult God. This was a continued Miracle, and a lively Emblem of the Deity, which is full of Light and Glory in it ſelf, but is environ'd with ſuch impenetrable darkneſs to us, that we can neither comprehend his Nature nor his Operations, but as he is pleaſed to ſhine out and ſhew ſomewhat of himſelf to us. But this was yet more than a bare Miracle, it was a conſtant Preſence and Inhabitation of God, who not only kept the Cloud and Light from being diſſipated, which otherwiſe muſt have hap'ned according to the Laws of Matter and Motion; but he was ſo ſignally preſent in it, that in the whole Style of the *Old Teſtament*, *Jehovah* was ſaid to *dwell between the* Cherubins, *to ſhine out, to ſhew the Light of his Countenance, or to hide his face, and cover himſelf with a thick Cloud. He was ſaid to be in his Temple, to ſit on his Throne*; with a great many other expreſſions, which relate to this; *The Lord of Glory*, and the *God of Glory, his appearing in Glory, his coming with Glory*, do all belong to this. From whence it is plain, that a conſtant and immediate viſible Indwelling of the *Jehovah* was according to the Scripture-Phraſe, ſaid to be *Jehovah*, which was applied to nothing elſe. It is further to be obſerved, That as the *Jews* called this the *Glory* ſimply, or the *Schechinah*, that is, the *Inhabitation*, ſo it was wanting in the Second Temple; and this was indeed its greateſt want, which no doubt occaſion'd the chief Grief of thoſe who mourned when they ſaw the Second Temple; ſince to one who was an *Iſraelite* indeed, this was the real Glory; the Gold and the Silver being poor matters in compariſon with this. Theſe were comforted by the Prophet *Haggai*, who promiſed to them in the Name of God, that *God would fill the houſe with his Glory*; he alſo takes off meaner minds from their opinion of a defect for the want of Gold and Silver, ſince that was all God's: So they offer'd up nothing in that to him, that was not his already. The *Glory* that is promis'd, was to exceed the *Glory of the former Houſe*; to which two great Characters are added, the one, *that he would ſhake all Nations*; that is, an Appearance ſhould come, in which the *Gentiles* ſhould be concerned in an eminent manner: The other is, *that in that place he would give Peace*. Now let any unprejudic'd man conſider, if *Herod's* rebuilding the Temple can in any ſort be thought to anſwer this; eſpecially the *Glory* being both in the true Value of thing, and in the Prophetick Style, to be underſtood of that ſignal Preſence of God in the Temple, which was its ſolid and true *Glory*. Since then the *Jews* looked for this, and that by many Prophecies concerning the *Meſſias*, mention was made of *his appearing in Glory*; this could be meant no other way by them, but that either he was to reſtore that Glory to the Temple, or that he was to have it in himſelf; and ſince it was to be *greater than that of the former Houſe*, there muſt have been ſome eminent Character in it beyond the former: In particular, the whole World was to be ſtruck with it, which is expreſſed in the Prophetick Strain, by *the ſhaking the Heavens and the Earth*, *the Sea and the dry Land*; and *the ſhaking of all Nations*. I do not argue from that which follows, of *the deſire of all Nations*, becauſe I know it is capable of another Tranſlation, and I will build upon ſure grounds. This *Glory* was likewiſe to *bring Peace* with it; which cannot be literally underſtood, ſince the *Jews* had very little *Peace*, either from the days of *Herod*, to whom they apply this; or from the days of our Saviour, to whom the

Hag. 2. 6. 7, 8, 9.

Chriſtians

Christians apply it. Now from all this it is to be inferred, that the Apostles applying universally the name Κύριος to our Saviour, could mean no other, but that he was the true *Jehovah* by a more perfect Indwelling of the Deity in him, than that had been which was in the Cloud. This *Glory* was *greater* than the other; for the other dwelt in a Mass of meer Matter, whereas this dwelt in the Soul and Body of our Saviour; and a Soul is much a perfecter sort of Being than the purest Matter possible. This was also to last *for ever*, whereas the other had a determined Duration, and came to a period: and the other did shine out only upon special Occasions, whereas in this we all *with open face as in a glass beholding the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory*; a period made up of the Phraseology that belonged to the *Schechinah*: as is also that of *his being the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image*, or Character, *of his Person*; that of the *Word which was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the Only Begotten Son of the Father*; that *of the light of the Glorious Gospel*, or rather of the Gospel of the *Glory of Christ*; and that of *the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face* or person *of Jesus Christ*; all these, with many more that might be quoted; do so plainly allude to the Phraseology of the *Cloud of Glory*, that it is not possible for any who consider things carefully, to avoid the Evidence of it. If it had not been so, what can be said to justify this manner of expression, especially the giving the Translation of the Incommunicable Name that was in the *Old Testament*, in a thread all over the *New*, to our Saviour? This was the laying snares for the first Believers, and that in the most important Point of all Religion; so that since our Saviour denounced a *Wo to him*, by whom *Scandals should come*; the Apostles were the first that incurred it, if they by a continu'd course of Style led the world to believe that a meer man was the great *Jehovah*. If that had occurred only now and then, the extent of the signification of the *Greek* word might be alledged; but it being the Title which they constantly give him, as well as it was that by which the *Jews* understood the *Jehovah* to be meant, this cannot in any sort be justified from a gross Abuse put on the World, if the *Messias* was not the *Jehovah*. The great Objection that arises against this is, that tho Κύριος is indeed the common Translation for *Jehovah*, yet sometimes it is put for the other *Hebrew* words, both *Elohim* and *Adonai*; and that in the *New Testament* it is used rather in opposition, or more properly in subordination to the Name of *God*, which seems to be stated very plainly by St. *Paul*, when he says, there *were many that were called Gods, whether in Heaven or in Earth, as there were Gods many, and Lords many*; in opposition to all which he asserts, that to Christians there is *but one God the Father, of whom were all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus, by whom were all things, and we by him*: From hence it seems that the true Notion of this, according to St. *Paul* is, That as the Heathen Nations believed some supream Deities, and other deputed or lower Deities, that watch'd over particular Nations; so we Christians do own only one Eternal God, the Creator and Preserver of all; and one Lord, to whom he hath given the Government of all things: So that this, as it favours the Notion of one exalted to divine Authority and Honor, it does likewise take away quite the whole force of this Argument: and so it cannot be well establish'd without considering this very carefully. It is then to be observed, that through the *Old Testament*, *God* is spoken of under two different Notions; the one is general, as he created and govern'd

2 Cor. 3, 18

1. Heb. 3.

1. John 14.

2 Cor. 4. 4.

Verse 6.

18. Mat. 7.

1 Cor. 8. 5. 6.

govern'd all things; and the other is ſpecial, as he was in Covenant with the Jewiſh Nation, and as he govern'd them particularly by his Laws, was preſent among them in a Viſible Symbol, and watch'd over them by a diſtinguiſhing Providence. In this laſt ſenſe *Jehovah* is the Name by which he is ſtrictly expreſs'd, as their Federal God, that had an immediate Care over them, and a Right to them. The Nations that lived in Idolatry, had Notions which ſeem to be taken from this: For as they believ'd ſome ſupream and ſome ſubaltern Deities, ſo they alſo fanci'd that ſome, even of thoſe ſupream Deities, were more eſpecially related or appropriated to ſome places: Thus as they conceiv'd them to be Supream, they held them to be Gods; and as they believ'd them to have a ſpecial Relation to any Place or Nation, they were eſteem'd according to this piece of Jewiſh Phraſeology here us'd by St. *Paul*, *Lords* as well as *Gods*. In oppoſition to all which, we Chriſtians own but one *Supream God*: and we do alſo believe, that this great God is alſo our Federal God, or *Jehovah*, by his dwelling in the Human Nature of *Jeſus Chriſt*: So that he is our *Lord*, not by an aſſumption into high Dignity, or the communicating Divine Honor to him, but as the Eternal Word dwelt bodily in him; and thus he is our *Lord*, not as a Being diſtinct from, or deputed by the great God, but as the great God manifeſting himſelf in his Fleſh or Human Nature; which is the *great Myſtery of Godlineſs*, or of true Religion: And this will give a clear account of all thoſe other paſſages of the *New Teſtament*, in which the *Lord Jeſus* is mention'd as diſtinct from, or ſubordinate to God and *his Father*. The one is the more extended Notion of God, as the Maker and Preſerver of all things, and the other is the more ſpecial Notion, as appropriated to Chriſtians, by which God is federally their God, Lord, or *Jehovah*. This I think does fully eſtabliſh this Argument, and takes away the whole force of the Objection againſt it. But to carry this yet further, the Apoſtles do not only name him *thus*, in all their Writings, but they do propoſe him as the proper Object of Adoration, at the ſame time that they commanded the World to renounce all Idolatry, and to *ſerve the living God*. St. *Paul* gives this Definition of Heatheniſh Idolatry, that it was a worſhip given to thoſe *who by nature were not Gods*; yet he prays to Chriſt, he prays for *Grace, Mercy and Peace from him* to all the Churches he writes to; he gives him *Glory for ever and ever*; a Phraſe expreſſing the higheſt Act of Adoration: he *believes in him, he ſerves him*, he gives Bleſſing in his Name; he ſays, *That all in Heaven and Earth muſt confeſs him, and bow before him*; a Phraſe importing Adoration; he ſays, *the Angels of God worſhip him*. In other Epiſtles this is alſo often mention'd, and in St. *John*'s Viſions, all the Hoſts above are repreſented as falling down before him to worſhip him. Now the bare Incurvation does not import Divine Worſhip, but may be made to a Creature; yet Incurvation join'd with Prayers, Acts of Faith and Truſt, and Praiſes, is certainly Divine Worſhip. Since then our Saviour in his Temptation ſaid to the Devil, that according to the Law *we muſt worſhip the Lord our God, and ſerve him only*; ſince alſo the Angel when he reproved St. *John* for falling down before him, bids him *worſhip God*; then when theſe things are laid together, and it appears that all the Acts of Adoration by which we worſhip God, are alſo aſcribed to Chriſt, and offered up to him, either it muſt be confeſs'd, that he is truly God, or that the Chriſtian Religion ſets up Idolatry at the ſame time that it ſeems to deſign the pulling it down every where; as if Idolatry had only been to be changed

97. 1 Theſ. 1. 9.
4 Gal. 8.
2 Phil. 10.
Heb. 1. 6.
Rev. 5. 8.
4. Mat. 10.
19 Rev. 10.

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in its object, and to be transfered from all others to the Person of our Saviour.

This point of the worship of Christ is so plainly set forth in the *New Testament*, that the chief Opposers of the Article of his Divinity have asserted it with so much Zeal, that they deny, that such as refuse to pay it to him, deserve to be called Christians: and yet there is not any one point that is more fully and frequently condemned through the whole Scriptures, than the worshipping a Creature. It is also a main part of all the Exhortations of the Apostles. Angels were often sent on Divine Deputations, as the Instruments of the *great God*, but yet they were never to be worshipped. Idolatry is an Evil in it self, and is not only the Transgression of a positive precept, but it is a transferring of the Honor and Homage due to the Author of our Being, and the Fountain of all our Blessings, and the ascribing these to a Creature; it is a worshipping the *Creature besides the Creator*: And if the same Acts of Prayer and Thanksgiving in the same words, can be offered up both to the Creature and the Creator, then how can we still think that *God is a jealous God*, and that *he will not give his Glory to another*? In a word, this is that which seems so sensible, that one does not know what to think of those men's Reasons, who cannot bring themselves to believe any thing concerning the Divine Nature, which differs from their own Notions, and yet can swallow down so vast an Absurdity, that is more open to the compass of their Understandings, as that the same Acts in which we acknowledge and adore God, should be at the same time offered up to a Creature. V. 93. Isa. 42. 8.

But to urge this a little more closely, it is well known how averse the *Jews* were to all the appearances of Idolatry, in our Saviour's time; their Zeal against the figures of the Roman *Eagles*, set over the Temple-gates by *Herod*, and against the Statue of *Caligula*, besides many other Instances, prove this beyond all question. They were much prejudiced against the Apostles, as well as they had been against our Saviour; and the Apostles do in several passages of their Epistles set down these their prejudices, together with their own Answers to them: They excepted to the abrogating the Mosaical Ordinances, and to their calling in the *Gentiles*, and associating themselves with them; but it does not appear that they did ever charge them with Idolatry, nor do the Apostles in any hint ever offer to vindicate themselves from that Aspersion. Now if Christ had been only a Man Deify'd, advanc'd to Divine Honor, or if he had been ever so Noble a part, and even the first part of the Creation, and had been now made the Object of the worship of the Christians, let any Man see, if it is conceivable, that the *Jews* who were such implacable Enemies to Christianity, should not have held to this as their main Strength & chief Objection: Since as this was a very popular thing, in which it was easy to draw in all their Countrymen; so it was the easiest, as well as the most important part of their Plea, they might have yielded, that all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were true, and yet upon this pretence of Idolatry, they had the express words of their Law on their side. *If there ariseth among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of Dreams, and giveth thee a Sign or a Wonder; and the Sign or the Wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other Gods which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of Dreams, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your Heart; and with all your Soul.* This was such an express and full Decision of the Case, that he may imagine any thing, that can imagine that they could have past it by, and that they should not have objected it, or that the Apostles, if their Doctrine Deut. 13. 1, 2.

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had been either that of the *Arians*, or of the *Socinians*, should not have either answer'd or prevented the Objection, since they dwell long upon things that were much less important. Several that join'd themselves to Christianity were scandaliz'd, and fell back to the *Jews*; but it does not appear, that any of them ever charged them with Idolatry, or that the *Jews* ever reproach'd them with it; which yet we cannot think they would not have done, if the Christians had offer'd Divine Adoration to a *Creature*, to one that was a meer Man newly dignifi'd, or that had been made by God before all his other Works. Here a Creature was made a God, and the Christians were guilty of serving other gods, whom their Fathers had not known.

This cannot be retorted on us, who believe that Christ was God by vertue of the Indwelling of the *Eternal Word* in him. The *Jews* could make no Objection to this, who knew that their Fathers had worshipped the *Cloud of Glory*, because of God's resting upon it: So the adoring the *Messias* upon the supposition of the *Godhead's dwelling Bodily in him*, could bear no debate among the *Jews*; and since it was singly upon this point, that they could let it pass without raising Objections or Difficulties about it, and since we find in fact, that they did let it pass, and that the Apostles made no Explanations upon it, we have all possible reason to conclude, that it was thus understood of all hands at that time. I think it is not possible to imagine, that this could be otherwise: so that upon these Reasons, we may well and safely determine, that Christ was truly both God and Man; and that the Godhead did as really dwell in his Human Nature, and became united to it, as our Souls dwell in our Bodies, and are united to them.

x. 2 5, 22. 2 Col. 9.

Having then laid down this Matter from Authorities that run through the whole *New Testament*, and that return often in every Book of it, I may now upon greater Advantages refer such as will descend to a more particular Enquiry, to all those passages that assert *Christ's having created all things, Angels as well as Men; that he is over all and in all; before all things; in whom all things do subsist; that he is the Lord of Glory, the Great God, and the true God; the Lord Almighty; who was, is, and is to come; who knows all things, and can do whatsoever he will; who is the first and the last, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; who alone hath Immortality; who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God; who will raise the dead at the last day, and judge the World; who is God manifested in the Flesh, the great Mystery of Godliness; who is over all God blessed for ever.* These and many more such like passages, but above all, the beginning of the Gospel of St. *John*, on which I need not insist, since that has been done with such Strength and Clearness of Reason by a much better Hand; All these single passages, I say, are so many express Proofs of this great Article of our Religion, that I am confident, those who have clear'd themselves of that great prejudice against it, to which the first part of this Discourse was directed, cannot read them without feeling that they are wrestling against the full current of the whole *New Testament*, who oppose this.

1 Col. 16. 17. 2 Jam. 1. 1 Cor. 2. 8. 2 Tit. 13. 1 John 5. 20. 1 Rev. 8. 21. Joh. 17. 3 Phil. 21. 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18. 2 Phil. 6. 5 John 21. to 29. 6 John 54. 1 Tim. 3. 16 9 Rom. 5.

I know a great deal has been said to take off the force of every one of them; for if a Man resolves beforehand not to believe a thing, he may easily bring out matter enough to avoid the most express words that can be invented: yet this I dare positively affirm, that at their rate of answering passages, with which we urge them, it were easy to answer the most express words that we could be capable to contrive, for setting out our Doctrine: to which this is likewise to

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be added, That it will be very hard to preserve any respect for Writings that are filled with such Intimations of so Important a Doctrine; all which at first view seem to carry a Sense which they judge Monstrous and Impious, and that with much labour and difficulty are wrought to another Sense. It will not be easy to think, those men had the common degrees of Honesty and Discretion, not to speak of Inspiration, who writ in such a Style, with such Phrases, and in such a continu'd Strain, that ordinary Readers must stumble in every step; and that in a point of such vast Consequence, as whether a meer Creature is *the great and true God*, or not? and that a great deal of Dexterity and Diligence is necessary to give them another sense. I must own, that if I could think so of the Scriptures, I should lose all Esteem for them, and could think no other of the Pen-men of them, but that their great Affection for their Master had led them to say many things concerning him, that were Excessive and Hyperbolical, and not strictly true. This is literally, and without any aggravation, the sense that I have of this Matter: and the prophane Tribe of *Libertines* go all into this, of laughing down all Mysteries; knowing well, that when they have once gain'd that point, the *New Testament* it self will be laughed down next, in which they are so plainly contain'd: And indeed, the Christian Religion must be the most self-contradicting of all the Religions in the World, since it does so often condemn the worshipping of Creatures, and yet heaps all sorts of Divine Honors on a Creature; and St. *John* must be a most incongruous Writer, who could at the conclusion of his first Epistle, say of Christ Jesus, *This is the true God, and Eternal Life*, and in the very next words add, *Little Children keep your selves from Idols*, when in the very preceding words he had been setting them on to it, if St. *Paul*'s definition must hold true, that Idolatry is *a service to those who by nature are not gods.*

It is true, upon this they will recriminate and say, That there being nothing more expressly and frequently contain'd in Scripture, and that indeed arises more plainly out of our *Idea* of God, than that he is *One*, we destroy that by setting up *Three*. This would press hard, if we did affirm *three distinct Beings*; but since that wich is *One* in it self, may be *Three* in other respects, it is only a consequence that they infer, but which we deny, That we set up more Gods than one; and no man is to be charg'd with the suppos'd Consequences of his Doctrine, when he himself does not own them, but denies them, and thinks he can plainly show that they do not necessarily follow from it. We do plainly perceive in our selves *two*, if not *three* different Principles of Operation, that do not only differ, as Understanding and Will, which are only different modes of thinking, but differ in their Character and way of Operation. All our Cogitations and Reasonings are a sort of Acts, in which we can reflect on the way how we operate; we perceive that we act freely in them, and that we turn our Minds to such Objects and Thoughts as we please. But by another Principle of which we perceive nothing, and can reflect upon no part of it, we live in our Bodies, we animate and actuate them, we receive Sensations from them, and give Motions to them; we live and die, and do not know how all this is done. It seems to be by some Emanation from our Souls, in which we do not feel that we have any liberty, and so we must conclude, that this Principle in us is natural and necessary. In Acts of Memory, Imagination and Discourse, there seems to be a mixture of both Principles, or a third that results out of them: for we feel a freedom in one respect, but as for those Marks

that are in our Brain, that ſet things in our Memory, or furniſh us with words, we are neceſſary Agents, they come in our way, but we do not know how. We cannot call up a Figure of things of words at pleaſure. Some diſorder in our Mechaniſm hides or flattens them, which when it goes off, they ſtart up and ſerve us, but not by any Act of our Underſtanding or Will: Thus we ſee that in this ſingle undivided Eſſence of ours, there are different Principles of Operation, ſo different as Liberty and Neceſſity are from one another: I am far from thinking, that this is a proper Explanation or Reſemblance of this *Myſtery*; yet it may be called in ſome ſort an Illuſtration of it, ſince it ſhows us from our own Compoſition, that in one Eſſence there may be ſuch different Principles, which in their proper Character, may be brought to the terms of a Contradiction, of being free and not free. So in the Divine Eſſence, which is the ſimpleſt and perfecteſt Unity, there may be *Three*, that may have a diverſity of Operations as well as Oeconomies. By the firſt, God may be ſuppos'd to have made and to govern all things: by the ſecond, to have actuated and been moſt perfectly united to the Humanity of Chriſt; and by the third, to have Inſpir'd the Pen-men of the Scriptures, and the Workers of Miracles, and ſtill to renew and fortify all good Minds. But tho we cannot explain how they are *Three*, and have a true diverſity from one another, ſo that they are not barely different Names and Modes; yet we firmly believe that there is but one God; and with this I conclude all that I have intended to ſay on the *Head of the Divinity of Chriſt*. *p. 16*

The next Head that I have now before me, is his *Death* and *Sufferings*. Which I intend to treat in the ſame general way in which I conſider'd the former. I muſt firſt obſerve, that School-men and the Writers of poſitive Divinity, have upon this Head laid down a great many Subtilties, in which the Scripture is abſolutely ſilent.

They begin with a Poſition, that is the Foundation of all their Calculations, that God cannot freely forgive ſin; that puniſhing as well as remunerative Juſtice, are eſſential to him; that God being Infinite, every Offence againſt him has an infinite Guilt, and muſt be expiated either by Acts of infinite Value, or of infinite Duration; and that a Perſon of an infinite Nature, was only capable of Acts of an infinite Value; that ſuch a one was neceſſary for expiating ſin. But in all this gradation, there is one main defect, That the Scripture ſets none of theſe Speculations before us; nor is it eaſie to apprehend, that a right of puniſhing, which is in the Legiſlator, and a right to a Reward, which paſſes from him to the perſon that acquires it, ſhould be equally eſſential to God. In the one, his Fidelity and Juſtice are bound, becauſe of the right that accrues to another; but the other of puniſhing, ſeems to be a Right that is veſted in himſelf, which he may either uſe or not, as he pleaſes: and if every ſin, as being of infinite Guilt, muſt be expiated by an infinite Act, it will not be eaſy to make this out, how the Acts of Chriſt, tho infinite in Value, ſhould ſtand in a ſtrict Equality with all the ſins of ſo many men, every one of which is of infinite guilt. Therefore theſe being a ſubtil Contexture of Legal Metaphyſicks, of which the Scripture is ſilent, it beſt becomes us to take our Notions from the Scriptures themſelves. It is true, *Juſtice* and *Juſtification* being the terms uſed upon this Head, in ſome of the Epiſtles, that ſeems to give ſome Authority to thoſe reckonings which are laid down to make out a Juſtice in all God's Proceedings. But thoſe who obſerve the Style of the Scriptures more narrowly, *&c. 85* *p. 92*

will

will see, that those words import no more but a state of Favour and *Acceptation with God*; for the *Righteousness of the Law*, was a man's acceptation that had served God in the Mosaical Dispensation; and the *Righteousness of Faith* was the Acceptation that a man in the Gospel-Dispensation had in the sight of God; so that the frequent use of those words will be found to have no relation to those subtil weighings of Infinities one against another.

But I go next to shew in what Notion, and under what a set of Phrases this matter is stated to us in the *New Testament*: It is then to be consider'd, that when the *New Testament* was writ, there was not any one thing that all people understood better, than the Sacrificatory Style, and all the Phrases that belonged to it. The *Jews* were much accustom'd to it, and had a great variety of Sacrifices that they offer'd up to God; and the *Gentiles* were likewise well acquainted with all the several sorts of Sacrifices that us'd to be offer'd up among them. And this was not one of the secrets of their Religion, that was kept only among the Priests, and was not to be communicated to the people; it was known to them all most particularly, for they were to bring and offer those Victims. Therefore it is plain, that no Forms of Speech were then so fully and so generally understood, as those which related to Sacrifices. The *Heathens* had their Expiatory and Piacular Sacrifices, by which they did reckon that they transfer'd their sins on the man or beast that was devoted, and that they thereby expiated them; and those they reckon'd aton'd the offended Deity by their death, which they suffer'd in their stead: They also had many Lustrations and Ablutions upon their offering their Sacrifices, to import the Atonement that was made by them; and at the making their Covenants, they had Sacrifices with which they propitiated Heaven, and seal'd their Covenant: This practice of Expiatory Sacrifices had been indeed both so Ancient and so universally spread, that it is not an unreasonable Conjecture, to think that there was a Tradition in favour of it, convey'd down from *Noah*. We are very sure, that both *Greeks* and *Romans* were at the time that the *New Testament* was written, very full of the Style and Phrases that belong'd to Expiatory Sacrifices. The *Jews* were no less acquainted with them; they had both their Sin and Trespass-Offerings; their great yearly Expiation by the Sacrifice of a Goat; they burnt a Red-Cow in a peculiar manner, and with its Ashes they were purify'd and sprinkled. They had also their daily Offerings of two Lambs, and their Peace Offerings, and Free-will Offerings; and in their Law this Sacrifice was call'd *their Atonement*, by which their sin was forgiven; it was also said to *bear their Iniquity*, which was among them a Phrase importing Guilt. For while a man stood under the guilt of his sin, liable to punishment, he was said *to bear his Iniquity*: Their Sin-Offerings were in their Language call'd simply *their sins*; to which, tho our Translators have added the word *Offering*, yet in the *Hebrew* they are call'd *Sin* or *Trespass*, and in the *Greek*, render'd *for Sin*; and in this all the people of that Nation were certainly well instructed, it being by these that their Consciences were quieted, their Sins pardon'd, and God reconcil'd to them.

So this ground that I lay down is certain, That there was not any one sort of things, which the whole World knew better than all that belong'd to Sacrifices. At the time of writing the *New Testament* they certainly were more accustom'd to it, and understood it much better than we generally do now, in Ages in which those practices have so long ceas'd, that the Memory of them is

quite extinguiſhed. It is indeed very probable, that many particular Phraſes belonging to them, might have been by a Poetical Liberty, extended to other Matters: for things of the ſacred'ſt nature are by Poets and Orators made uſe of to give the livelieſt Illuſtrations, and raiſe the ſtrongeſt paſſions poſſible: yet after all, an entire Thread of a ſacrificatory Style, was a form of deſcription, that the World muſt have known could belong only to an Expiatory Sacrifice, that is, to ſome perſon or thing that was devoted to God by a Sinner in his own ſtead, and upon the account of his ſin and guilt was to be ſome way deſtroy'd, in ſign of what he own'd he had deſerv'd; and this was to be done in order to the reconciling the guilty Perſon to God, the *Guilt* being transfer'd from the *Perſon* to the *Sacrifice*; and God by accepting the Sacrifice, was reconcil'd to the perſon, whoſe ſin was upon that account forgiven. This being thus laid down, let us look next to the whole ſtrain of the *New Teſtament*, particularly to thoſe parts of it in which this matter is more fully treated about.

Here I will again follow the method that I took upon the former Head, and not enter ſo particularly upon the Criticiſms of ſome paſſages, but will view the thing in groſs, that ſeeming to be both the moſt convincing way in it ſelf, and the beſt ſuited to my preſent purpoſe. I muſt further obſerve, that this was a point of vaſt Conſequence, as being that which concern'd men's Peace with God, the pardon of their ſins, and their hopes of God's Favour, and of Eternal Happineſs. Therefore we ought not to imagine, that Rhetorick or Poetical Forms of Speech could be admitted here, to the aggravating of ſo ſolemn a piece of our Religion beyond its true value; ſo that we muſt conclude, that here, if in any thing, the Apoſtles writ ſtrictly, beſides that their manner of writing is always plain and ſimple. When then they ſet forth the Death of Chriſt with all the Pomp of the ſacrificatory Phraſes, we muſt either believe it to be a true Propitiatory Sacrifice, or otherwiſe we muſt look upon them as warm indiſcreet men, whoſe Affections to our Saviour heated them ſo far, as to carry them in this Matter out of all meaſure far beyond the truth.

Thoſe who oppoſe this Article, believe that Chriſt only died for our good, but not in our ſtead; that by his Death he might fully confirm his Goſpel, and give it a great Authority, that ſo it might have the more Influence upon us: they alſo believe, that by his dying, he intended to ſet us a moſt perfect pattern of bearing the ſharpeſt Sufferings, with the perfecteſt Patience and Submiſſion to the Will of God, and the moſt entire Charity to thoſe at whoſe hands we ſuffer; and that by doing this, he was to Merit at God's hands that ſupream Authority, with which he is now veſted for our good, that ſo he might obtain a Power to offer the World the pardon of ſin upon their true Repentance; and finally, That he died in order to his Reſurrection, and forgiving a ſenſible Proof of that main Article of his Religion, That we ſhall all be raiſed up at the laſt day; therefore he was to die, and that in ſuch a manner, that no man might queſtion the truth of it, that ſo his Reſurrection might give a moſt demonſtrative Proof both of the poſſibility of it, and of our being to be raiſed up by him, who was thus declared to be the Son of God, by his Riſing from the dead.

On the other hand, we believe that God intending to pardon ſin, and to call the World by the offers of it to Repentance, deſign'd to do it in ſuch a manner, as ſhould both give us the higheſt Ideas of the guilt of ſin, and

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also of his own Love and Goodness to us, which he thus order'd: That after that Divine Person in whom dwelt the *Eternal Word*, had sufficiently opened his Doctrine, and had set a perfect pattern of Holiness to the world, he was to be fallen on by a company of perfidious and cruel men, who after they had loaded him with all the spiteful and reproachful Usage that they could invent, they in conclusion Crucified him; he all the while bearing, besides those visible Sufferings in his Person, most inexpressible Agonies in his Mind, both before and during these his Sufferings; and yet bearing them with a most absolute Submission to his Father's Will, and a perfect Charity to those his Persecutors; and that in all this, he willingly offer'd himself to suffer both upon our account, and in our stead, which was so accepted of God, that he not only raised him from the dead, and exalted him up on high, giving to him even as he was Man, all power both in Heaven and Earth, but that upon the account of it, he offer'd to the World the pardon of sins, together with all those other Blessings which accompany it in his Gospel, and that he will have us in all our Prayers for pardon, or other favours, claim them through that Death, and owe them to it.

These are two contrary Doctrines upon this Head. Now let us see which of them come nearest the Manner and Style in which the Scriptures set it out in the *New Testament*. Christ is said to have *reconcil'd us to his Father*; *to be our Propitiation*, *to have born our sins*, *and to have been bruis'd for our Iniquities*; *to have been made sin for us*; *to have been accursed for us*; *to have given himself for our sins*; *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity*; *he is said to have died for*: *or in the stead of our sins*; *to have given his life a ransom for us*, *or in lieu of us*; he is said *to have born our sins on his own body*; he has appointed a perpetual Remembrance of his Death in these words, *That his body was broken for us*; *and that his blood was shed for many for the Remission of sins*; *Remission of sins is offered in his name*, *and through his blood*; *God laid upon him the iniquities of us all*; *he was our justification*, *our peace and our redemption*; He is called the *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the World*. His Death and intercession are very copiously compared to the Expiation made on the solemn day of the Atonement for the whole Nation of the *Jews*, on which after the Sacrifice was offer'd on the Altar, the High Priest carri'd in the Blood to the Holy of Holies, and set it down before the Cloud of Glory, as that which reconcil'd that people to God. This is done in so full a Discourse, and with such a variety of Expressions, that it is not easy to imagine, how any thing could be more plainly told. He is call'd *the High-Priest that was consecrated to offer up Sacrifices for the people*; it is said, *That he has entred into the Holy Place by his own Blood*, *having obtain'd Eternal Redemption for us*; *his Blood purges our Consciences from dead works*, *to serve the living God*; *he hath put away sin by the Sacrifice of himself*, *and was once offer'd to bear the sins of many*; *we are Sanctify'd by the offering of the Body of Christ once for us all*; *and after he had offer'd one Sacrifice for sins*, *he for ever sate down on the right hand of God*, *having by that one Offering for ever perfected them that are sanctified*: *so that we enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus*: He is also compared to the Sacrifice that was burnt without the Camp; and that he might *Sanctify the people with his own Blood*, *he suffer'd without the Gate*; and he is call'd that great *Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting Covenant*.

1 Joh. 2. 2.
1 Pet. 2. 24.
1 Cor. 15. 3
2 Cor. 5. 21
1. Gal. 4.
3. Gal, 13.
2 Tit. 14.
20 Mat. 28.
3 Rom. 25.
4 Rom. 25.
5 Rom. 6.
10; 11. and to the end.
1 Cor. 1. 30.
1 Eph. 7.
1 Col. 14.
20, 21.
1 Joh. 29.
9 Heb. 11, 12, 13, 14. & 8. 26. 28.
10. Heb. 10, 12, 14, 19.
13. Heb. 12. 20.

Now let it be consider'd, That as this Argument is in some places closely pursu'd in many chosen and strict Expressions, so it returns in a great variety

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of Phraſes through the whole Epiſtles, in ſo many different places, and on ſo many ſeveral occaſions, that nothing can appear plainer in words, than that the Apoſtles coſider'd this as the Capital Article of their whole Doctrine, and the Main Point given them in Commiſſion. In their preaching to all Nations they inculcate it chiefly, they repeat it often, and for ought I have been able to judge, they have not left one ſingle Phraſe that belong'd to Sacrifices in the *Old Teſtament*, which they have not appli'd to the Death of Chriſt in the *New*. It is true, they mention his Reſurrection often, as the Great and Eminent Proof of Chriſt's being the *Meſſias*; but they never apply that with thoſe lively and inflam'd Expreſſions to men's Conſciences, that they do his Death and Sufferings. The Merit is plainly put *there*; the Reſurrection being the Glorious Reward and Conſequence of it. Upon his *Death* and *Croſs* it is that they dwell the moſt; they ſet an infinite Value upon his Loving us, and dying for us: Now if he had only di'd, for our good, tho it is not to be deni'd, but that this was a great Evidence of perfect Love; yet the world was full of Stories of men that had di'd for their Country; ſo that barely the dying for our good, if it had not been likewiſe *in our ſtead*, could not have born ſuch a ſublime Strain as that is in which they ſet this out.

If our Saviour had only been to endure thoſe bodily Torments, how violent ſoever, it does not give any extraordinary Character of him, that the very night before, he was ſo *exceedingly amaz'd* at the proſpect of what he was entring upon, that he became *ſorrowful even to the death*; and was in ſuch a bodily Agony, that his *Sweat fell down as great drops of Blood*; which ſhews that his Mind was then in a much more unconceivable and unſupportable Agony; ſo that an Angel was ſent from Heaven to comfort him. Now if there was no more in his Sufferings than that which we ſee, here is a depreſſion far below what great Heroes have expreſs'd, even during the moſt extream Sufferings; and yet it was at a diſtance from them, only upon the proſpect of their coming on. All the while before, our Saviour knew they were coming, and yet till then, no Agony is heard of; which intimates, that there was ſomewhat peculiar in it, which ſome Churches have in their Liturgies call'd very properly *his unſpeakable and unutterable Sufferings*. They are ſo indeed; for we who have only a Notion of vaſt Agonies in the Mind, when Rack'd with the Horror of guilt, it cannot bear the apprehenſions of the Wrath of God, and the reproaches that ariſe from a wounded Conſcience; cannot apprehend what could have rais'd ſuch amazing Sorrows in ſo pure and unſpotted a Soul, that was conſcious to it ſelf of no ſin, and ſo could fear nothing from a juſt and good God: therefore we muſt not pretend to explain what we cannot underſtand.

22. Luke 44. 26. Mat. 36, 37, 38.

But to return to the main Argument: When this whole Collection of the ways in which the Death of Chriſt is propos'd to the World in the *New Teſtament*, is laid together, we muſt conclude, that either this Death was a propitiatory Sacrifice, or we muſt for ever deſpair of finding out the meaning of any thing that can be expreſs'd in words: Nothing could be plainer ſaid, nor oftner repeated in a greater variety of Expreſſions, proper to ſignify this, and not proper for any thing elſe. I do not deny, but thoſe who would turn all this another way, have found to every one of theſe paſſages ſomewhat that ſeems to favour the diverting them to another ſignification; but as it was obſerv'd before, if ſome of the Sacrificatory Phraſes have by ſome Authors, and upon ſome occaſions been brought down to a ſignification leſs important, it will not

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from thence follow, that Discourses that are a contexture of those Notions and Forms of Speech, should be so wrested from their natural Signification, to a sense so far below the genuine and receiv'd Importance of the words. And indeed I do not see what we can make of any part of the *New Testament*, or how much of it we can receive with any degrees of Esteem, if we do not believe the Death of Christ to have been a truly Expiatory Sacrifice offerr'd up to God in our stead.

Nor does this at all contradict the freedom of the Grace of God in pardoning sin, which is so much set forth in Scripture, since there is matter enough for Free-Grace to exert it self, notwithstanding the Atonement made by Sacrifice. For God might have, in the strictness of Justice, demanded satisfaction from our selves; so his commuting the matter, and accepting of it in the person of another, is a very high Act of his Grace; then our Saviour's offering himself up so freely for us, was a signal as well as an undeserv'd Act of Love, in that he *died for us while we were yet Enemies*: and tho this Act belong'd to his Human Nature, yet the Union between it and the *Eternal Word* that dwelt in him, may very well entitle God to it, so that in that respect this also may be call'd an Act of God's Grace. The offering this to us on such easy terms, and the exacting only a sincere obedience as the condition of it, without insisting on an entire Obedience, is another part of the Grace of it: and finally, The proposing such vast Rewards to our poor services, and the conveying the knowledge of this to some Nations, when others are left in Darkness and Ignorance, are very great and undeserved Acts of Love and Mercy: so that the sense of our Saviour's dying for us as our Sacrifice, does not at all derogate from, or lessen our acknowledgments of the Love and Goodness of God.

Nor are those Objections of more value that are taken from the shortness of the continuance of Christ's Sufferings, since besides what is commonly urg'd to this purpose from the infinite Dignity of the person, we are to consider, that in Sacrifices it is the Appointment and the Acceptation that makes the satisfaction; for God's accepting a Sacrifice, is an abatement of the Rigour of Justice, and a declaring that he will pardon sins in such a Method, and upon such a Consideration: and there appear very good Reasons, even to us, for the method that God thought fit to take in this great Transaction. He intended to call the World to Repentance and Reformation: Now it had been a vain attempt to have perswaded men to repent, without an offer of pardon; for if men are made desperate, there is no great hope of prevailing on them; so an offer of pardon was necessarily to be made; yet this was to be made in such a way, as to have the greatest effect possible on men. If the offer of pardon had been made upon too slight a consideration, the World might have been tempted to have had slight thoughts of sin, as a thing of no such black nature, since it was so easily forgiven: and therefore to heighten the sense of the odiousness of sin, God would pardon it in such a manner, as should show how much he hated it, at the same time that he shew'd such Love and Compassion to sinners. Since then the great Design of this whole Oeconomy was to reform the World, we see in every step of it a tendency to that; a pardon was offer'd to give men hopes, but the consideration of it was so amazing, as to encrease their Horrour at sin, and their strict watchfulness against that, which was so hard, and stood so dear to expiate.

Further, The rule of life that was proposed, was so exactly pure and holy,

that

that it well became a God of Infinite Purity to impose it on us, since it has in all its parts such a tendency to the making us perfect, even as our Heavenly Father is perfect. It begins at the cleansing our hearts, and from thence it goes the whole round of our lives, in all our Actions, Circumstances and Relations: It neither dispences with an idle word, a lewd look, nor a defiling thought; but is a Law of life and love, that will sanctify every individual Nature, and settle every Society that comes under its conduct. But that, as the holiness of this Rule is no small honour to the Religion of which it is so main a part; so that the strictness of it might not frighten men from embracing it, tho there is no slackning of the obligation of the Law, but that every offence against any part is a sin; yet there is an abatement made, as it is a Condition of Salvation: And thus it is not an entire, but a sincere obedience that is made the Condition upon which we are admitted to the Gospel-Covenant. Every sin gives a wound, and requires repentance to wash and heal it; but every sin does not shut us out from a right to the blessings of this Covenant: So that here is a main distinction never to be forgotten. We are under the whole Gospel, as it is a law and rule of life; and every time that we break any part of it, we ought to be humbled for it before God; but nothing that does not defile our hearts, and make us go off from the sincerity of our Obedience, breaks our Relation to Christ, and dissolves our being in a state of Grace and Salvation.

It may seem a diminution of the Purity of our Religion, that an entire holiness is not made the Indispensable Condition, as well as the absolute Duty of Christians; since God might have furnished us with such degrees of Grace, as might have conquered every Corrupt Inclination: Besides, that this Doctrine of the Unattainablenels of Perfection, and Invincible Infirmity, does furnish Bad men and cold Christians with many Pretences to hide or excuse their Faults, and makes the greater part sit down contented with very low degrees, in which they quiet themselves with this seeming Defectiveness of the New Covenant. But it is certain, that every man who deals honestly and impartially by himself, does perceive that he might be much better than he truly is; and that God's assistances are not wanting to him, but that he is wanting to them: Every man feels, that it is by the vicious use of his own Liberty, and not by reason of any Impotency that is in his Nature, that he falls in sin: And the eminent strictness and victory over Sin, that some men arrive at, who shine as Lights in the World, serves to let the rest see what they might come to, if it were not for their own fault: So that God's accepting a sincere Obedience, instead of an entire one, is no encouragement to Sin; but is a condescention to Humane Infirmity: And it seems that God does, while he continues us here on Earth, suffer our Natures still to hang so heavy about us, and sometimes to prevail so fatally over us, that we may be thereby obliged to live in a more constant distrust of our selves, and a more humble dependance on him, to make us feel the necessity of applying our selves often to him for pardon and assistance, and also to beget in us more tender Compassions for the Frailties of others, which we can more easily bear with, and forgive, when we reflect on our selves, and what we are capable of. This gives a more melting Charity than could flow from a severer Vertue, that had never felt the weight of Nature, nor the strength of Temptations: If this is abused by some who turn the Grace of God into Lasciviousness, it is a very ungrateful return

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to God for his Mercy, and a signal abuse of his Goodness. *But if this Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost.*

There remains yet one Article to be well stated, relating to this matter, and that is to give the true notion of *Justification*, of which there seem to be two such different accounts given by St. *Paul* and St. *James*, that this has led men into a great many Subtilties. I shall first open this matter, as it is spoke of by these two Apostles: The Design of St. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, was to oppose that Conceit of the *Jews*, who thought it impossible to be in the favour of God without observing the *Mosaical* Rites. This he beats down, by leading them up to their Father *Abraham*, and shewing them how he came into a state of favour with God, before he had received the Covenant of Circumcision; and that his believing in God, was accepted of God, and reckoned to him, or *imputed to him for righteousness*; or in order to his being in the favour of God. The Inference that he naturally drew from this, was, that he was *justified without the works of the law*: And by the tenor of the whole Discourse, it is plain, That by the *works of the law*, are meant the *Mosaical* Precepts, and not the Works of *Moral Vertue*. For St. *Paul* had divided Mankind into those who were *in*, or *under the law*, and those who were *without law*; that is, into *Jew* and *Gentile*. The design of the Epistle was not to give us Metaphysical Abstractions and Distinctions between *Faith*, as it is a special Grace, and *Works* or Obedience to the Laws of God; but by *Faith* he means the entire receiving of the whole Gospel in its Commands, as well as Promises; for so he reckons *Abraham*'s readiness to offer up his Son *Isaac*, as an Act of his *faith*; so that *faith* stands for the complex of all the Duties of Christianity; and therefore his Assertion of our being *justified by faith without the works of the law*, signifies no more, than that those who received the Gospel, who believed it, and lived according to it, were put in the favour of God by it, without being brought under the obligation of the *Mosaical* Precepts.

4. Rom. 3.

2. Rom 12.

3. Rom. 28.

The same Argument is handled by him upon the same grounds in his Epistle to the *Galatians*, only there he gives a more explicite notion of that *faith* which justified, that it was a *faith that wrought by love*; So that in all St. *Paul*'s Epistles, he understands by *faith* the compleat receiving the Gospel in all its parts. But whether these Expressions were any of those that St. *Peter* says, the *unstable wrested to their own perdition*, or not, we see plainly by St. *James*'s Epistle, that some began to set up the Notion of a bare believing the Gospel, as that which justified; as if the meer profession of Christianity, or the persuasion of its truth, without a suitable Conversation, justified. For St. *James* speaks not of the *works of law*, but of *works* simply; and as he had just reason to condemn a Doctrine that tended to the total corruption of our Faith; so he plainly shews, that he did not differ from St. *Paul*, since he takes his chief Instance from *Abraham*'s Faith, which made him offer up his Son *Isaac* upon the Altar, by which *he was justified*; so that *faith wrought in his works, and by works faith was made perfect*: And he concludes all, *That as the body without the spirit was dead, so faith without works was dead also*: From whence it is plain, that *faith* in St. *James*, stands strictly for a believing the Truth of the Christian Religion, and not for an entire receiving the Gospel, which was the *faith* that St. *Paul* had treated of. These things will appear so clear to any one who will attentively read and consider the scope of St. *Paul*'s Epistles

5. Gal. 6.

2 James 12. *to the end.*

to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, and the Discourse in St. *James*'s Epistle, that I am confident no scruple can remain in men, that are not possessed with prejudices, or over-run with a nice sort of Metaphysicks, that some have brought into these matters; by which they have, instead of clearing them, rendred them very intricate and unintelligible: Their stating the instrumentality of faith in Justification; their distinguishing it from Obedience in this, but joining it with it in Sanctification, are niceties, not only without any ground in Scripture, but really very hurtful, by the disquiet they may give good minds: For if the Christian Doctrine is plain in any one thing, it must be in this, which is the foundation of our quiet, and of our hope. It would make a long Article to reckon up all the different Subtilties with which this matter has been perplexed: As whether Justification is an immanent or transient Act; whether it is a Sentence pronounced in Heaven, or in the Conscience; or whether it is only a Relation, and what constitutes it; what is the efficient, the instrument, and the condition of it; these, with much more of the like nature, filled many Books some years ago.

The strict sense of *Justification*, as it is a legal term, and opposite to *Condemnation*, is the absolution of a Sinner; which is not to be solemnly done till the final Sentence is pronounced after death, or at the day of Judgment: But as men come to be in the state to which those Sentences do belong, they in a freer form of speech are said to be *justified* or *condemned*. And as they *who*
3 John 18. *do not believe*, are under condemnation, and said to be *condemned already*; that is, they are liable to that Sentence, and under those Characters that belong to it, blindness, obduration of heart, and the Wrath and Judgments of God: So such Believers, to whom the Promises of the Gospel belong, and on whom the final Sentence shall be pronounced, justifying them, are said now to be *justified*, since they are now in the state to which that belongs: They have the Characters of it upon them, Faith, Repentance, and Renovation of heart and life, by which they come to be in the favour, and under the protection of God.

The Gospel is of the nature of a publick Amnesty, in which a Pardon is offered to all Rebels, who return to their duty, and live peaceably in obedience to the Law; and a day is prefixed to examine who has come in upon it, and who has stood out; upon which final Acts of Grace or Severity are to pass. It is then plain, that though every man is pardoned in the strictness of Law only by the final Sentence, yet he is really in the construction of Law pardoned upon his coming within the Terms on which it is offered; and thus men are justified, who do truly repent of, and forsake their sins, who do sincerely believe not only the truth of the Gospel in general, but do so firmly believe every part of it, that acts proportioned to that belief, arise out of it; when they depend so much on the Promises, that they venture all things in hope of them; and do so receive the Rules and Laws given in it, that they set themselves on obeying them in the course of their whole life, and in a most particular manner, when they lay claim to the Death of Christ, as their Sacrifice, and the means of their Reconciliation; with such a Repentance as changes their inward Natures and Principles, and such a Faith as purifies their hearts, and makes them become new Creatures.

These are the Conditions of this Covenant; and they are such Conditions, that upon lower than these it became not the Infinite Purity and Holiness of

God

God to offer us pardon, or to receive us into his favour: For without these, the Mercies and Favours of the Gospel had been but the opening a Sanctuary to Criminals, and the giving encouragement to Sin, if a few howlings to God for mercy, and the earnest imploring it, for the sake of Christ, and on the account of his Death, would serve turn. This every man, under the least agony of thought, will be apt to do, especially when death seems to be near him, and yet be still in all respects as bad as ever, this indeed is so slight a thing, that a greater disparagement cannot de offered to our Religion, nor can a greater strengthning of sin be contrived, than the giving any sort of encouragement to it; for it is one of the greatest, and the most mischievous of all those practical Errors which have corrupted Religion.

These are the most important parts of our whole Commission; and therefore we ought to state them first aright in our own thoughts, that so we our selves may be fully possessed with them, that they may sink deep into our own minds, and shew their efficacy in the reforming of our Natures and Lives, and then we shall be able to open them to others with more clearness, and with better advantages, when our hearts are inflamed with an overcoming sense of the Love and Goodness of God. If the Condition of this New Covenant were deeply impressed on our thoughts, then we should publish them with more life and joy to others, and we might then look for the *fulness of the blessing of the Gospel* on our selves, and on our labours.

The Exposition given by my Lord Bishop of Sarum of the second Article of our Religion examined. M. 14to xxxiii
A Vindication of the Primitive Fathers against the imputations of G. Ld Bp of in his discourse &c by Sam. Hill. M. 8vo xxxx.
Considerations on the Explications of the doctrine of the Trinity: occasioned by a sermon of his Grace &c. A discourse by the Ld Bp of Sarum. M. 4to L.
A Vindication of the sermons &c annexed A Letter of the Ld Bp to Williams M. 4to 4

DIS-

DISCOURSE III.

Concerning the

INFALLIBILITY

AND

AUTHORITY of the CHURCH.

AFTER we are well ſetled in the Belief of the Chriſtian Religion, our next enquiry muſt naturally be into the Way and Method of being rightly Inſtructed in the Doctrine, and other parts of this Religion; and that chiefly in one great Point, Whether we ought to employ our own Faculties in ſearching into this, and particularly into the meaning of thoſe Books in which it is contain'd? or, Whether we muſt take it from Oral Tradition, and ſubmit to any man, or body of men, as the Infallible Depoſitaries and Declarers of this Tradition.

In this ſingle point conſiſts the Eſſence of the differences between us and the Church of *Rome*: While we affirm, that the Chriſtian Doctrine is compleatly contain'd in the Scriptures, and that every man ought to examine theſe with the beſt helps, and all the skill and application of which he is capable: and that he is bound to believe ſuch Doctrines only, as appear to him to be contain'd in the Scriptures, but may reject all others that are not founded upon that Authority. On the other hand, The foundation upon which the Church of *Rome* builds, is this, 'That the Apoſtles deliver'd their Do-'ctrine by word of mouth to the ſeveral Churches, as the Sacred *Depoſitum* 'of the Faith: That the Books of the *New Teſtament* were written occa-'ſionally, not with intent that they ſhould be the Standard of this Religion; 'that we have theſe Books, and believe them to be Divine, only from the 'Church, and upon her Teſtimony; that the Church, with the Books, gives 'us likewiſe the Senſe and Expoſition of them, they being dark in many 'places; and that therefore the Traditional Conveyance, and the Solemn 'Deciſions of the Church, muſt be Infallible, and ought to be ſubmitted to

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'as such, otherwise there can be no end of Controversies, while every man 'takes upon him to expound the Scriptures, which must needs fill mens Minds 'with Curiosity and Pride, as well as the World with Heresies and Sects, 'that are unavoidable, unless there is a living speaking Judge: This they also 'prove from some places of Scripture, such as Christ's words to St. *Peter*, '*Upon this Rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail a-* 16. Mat. '*gainst it; and unto thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: Tell* 18, 19. '*the Church, I am with you alway, even to the end of the World; the Spirit* 18. Mat. 20 '*shall lead you into all Truth; and the Church is the Pillar and Ground of Truth.* 28 Mat. 20. This is their Doctrine, and these are their chief Arguments upon which it is 16. Joh. 13. founded. 1. Tim. 3. 16.

There is no point in Divinity that we should more clearly understand than this: for it is in it self of great Consequence, and is that which determines all the rest; if it is true, it puts an end to all other Controversies; and if it is false, it leaves us at liberty to examine every thing, and gives us the justest and highest prejudices possible against that Church that pretends to it without just grounds. It is also that which of all others the Missionaries of that Church understand the best, and manage the most dextrously; they are much practised to it, and they begin and end all their practise with this, which has fair appearances, and will bear a great deal both of popular Eloquence, and plausible Logick: so if men are not on the other hand as well fortifi'd, and as ready on the other side of the Argument, they will be much entangled as often as they have occasion to deal with any of that Church. There is not indeed any one point that I know of, that has been open'd and examin'd, both with that Beauty and Force, that is in *Chillingworth*'s Unvaluable Book upon this Subject. Few things of this nature have ever been handled so near a Mathematical Evidence, as he has pursu'd this Argument; and his Book is writ with such a thread of Wit and Reason, that I am confident few can enter upon it without going through with it. I shall now endeavour, in as narrow a compass as is possible, to set this matter in its true Light.

We must then begin with this, That the freedom of a man's Thoughts and Understanding, is the most Essential Piece of his *Liberty*, and that in which naturally he can the least bear to be limited: therefore any Restraints that are laid upon him in this, must be well and fully proved; otherwise it is to be suppos'd, that God could never intend to bring us under the yoke in so sensible and so valuable a thing, without giving clear and evident warrants for it: And as every Invasion on the Liberties of the Human nature, ought to be well made out; so every Priviledge which any person claims against the common fate of Mankind, ought to be also fully proved, before others can be bound to submit to it: We perceive in our selves, and we see in all others, such a feebleness of understanding, such an easiness to go too quick, and judge too fast, and such a narrow compass of knowledge, that as we see all Mankind is apt to mistake things, so we have no reason to believe, that any one is exempted from this, but as there are evident Authorities to prove it. Since then this is a Priviledge in those that have it, as well as an Imposition on those that have it not, it ought not to be offer'd at, or obtruded on the world without a full Proof. Probabilities, forced Inferences, or even disputable Proofs, ought not to be made use of here, since we have reason to conclude, that if God had intended to put any such thing upon us, he would have done it in so plain

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and uncontested a way, that there should have been no room to have doubted of it.

Besides, all such things as do naturally give jealousy, and offer specious grounds of mistrust, ought to be very clear. Since then all Companies of men that lodge themselves in any Authority, and more particularly those who manage mens Consciences, and the Concerns of Religion, have been too often observ'd to enlarge their powers, and to make the most of them they could, and that by their means, Religion has been often and much corrupted, the World has from hence a Right to exact very full proofs before they can be bound to believe any such body of men to be exempted from Error. This will yet appear the more evident, if that very Body in which this Infallibility is suppos'd to dwell, has manifestly corrupted the Morals, and the order or discipline of this Religion; if they have fill'd the world with Fables, if they have fallen under gross Ignorance, and have been over-run with Vice and Disorder; these must afford great occasion of suspecting them in all other things. If Impostures have been set up and promoted with great Zeal in some Ages, which have in other Ages of more Light and Knowledge been thrown out and disclaim'd; and if we find that the same Methods of Craft and Violence which have been practised in all other Societies, have been more notoriously and scandalously practis'd by the men of Infallibility, then we have from all these things just prejudices given us against this pretension. Now a just prejudice amounts to this, That we have no reason to believe a thing, unless we see very good grounds to believe it; and it gives us all reason to suspect those grounds, and to examine them well, before we are concluded by them.

Further, This being so great a Matter, and that which must settle all other things, we have just reason to believe, That if God has left such Authorities in the World, that he has also made it plain where they lie, and with whom they are to be found; for it is not imaginable that God should have concluded Mankind under such an Authority, and yet not have explain'd so necessary a Point, as, Who are the Depositaries of it, but to have left men to their shifts to find that out the best way they can: since till this is clear'd, the other is of no use. There is a dormant Infallibility, they say, in the Church, but no body knows where; for it is no Article of Faith in whom it is vested. We are where we were, only with this disadvantage, that if we think we are sure there is an Infallibility in the Church, but are not sure to whom it is trusted, we may be resisting this Infallibility by opposing those who indeed have it, while we adress our selves for it to others who have it not, tho we fancy it belongs to them.

In all Constitutions among men, the most evident thing is this, Where rests the Supreme Authority of that Constitution? And if this is necessary for the order and policy of the World, it is much more necessary, that if God has devolv'd so main a part of his own Authority, and indeed the dispensing of one of his own Attributes, this should be so described and circumstantiated, that there should be no danger of mistaking; and that there should have been such Characters given, by which all the World should have been as infallibly directed to this Authority, as it was to be infallible in its Decisions. When God consign'd such a Character to the Jewish Nation, that the Symbol of his presence was to appear, and that Answers were to be given out as he was consulted, it was expresly declar'd with whom it was lodged, and in what

Method

Method the High-Priest was to appear before the Lord, with the *Urim* in the Breast-plate; that so there might be no room left for Imposture or even for suspicion.

Upon all these reasons, we have a very just right to demand of those who call us to submit to their Infallibility, to give us such plain, express and determinate proofs for it, as are proportion'd to the Importance and Unusualness of that which they impose upon us. It is a vain thing to prove that this must be in the Church, because otherwise a great many Absurdities must needs follow, if it were not in it. When it is once prov'd that God has given it to his Church, we shall very willingly yield, that he had very good reasons for it; since so extraordinary a Power, which might be easily imploy'd to very bad purposes, certainly was not to be given but for very good ones; but it is a very preposterous way to argue, That God must have done such a thing, because we fancy that it is necessary to prevent some great Evil, or to procure some very great Good. For this is only to pretend to prove, that God ought to have done somewhat that he has not done; unless they can at the same time prove, that God has done it: this is to conclude, *That his Ways must be as ours are, and that his Thoughts must be as our Thoughts.* We may at this rate prove as well, that the *Messias* should have appear'd much sooner than he did; have shew'd his Miracles, and even his Body after his Resurrection more publickly than he did: This will prove, that the Gospel should have been preach'd to many Nations yet in Paganism; and this will rather, with an advantage in the Argument, prove, that there should be no sin left in the world, and that no man should be left to perish in his sins, and so be damn'd for them. It will require no great Art to make it appear, that these are much more dreadful things, and seem to be much more contrary to God's Nature, to his Love to Mankind, and to his Church: but indeed if we will give our selves scope upon this Argument, to fancy that God must do every thing, which we imagine would be very convenient, we should soon frame an *Idea* both of his Creation and his Providence, that is wholly different from what we perceive it to be.

We are not capable of so vast a Thought, as to take in a Scheme of those great Designs that lie in the Eternal Mind, and that are scatter'd in a seeming Confusion through his Works and Ways, but are beautiful and orderly as they are gathered together in his *Ideas*. We cannot say what is good or evil with relation to the whole; nor what are the propereſt Methods of bringing about the one, or of diverting the other: so, to conclude, the arguing that Christ had dealt ill with his Church, if he had not made her Infallible, unless it is made out that he has done it, is only a reproaching him with this, That he has not done that which he ought to have done, and that he has not been faithful in discharging the Trust committed to him of his Father. Therefore all these are false ways of arguing, which cannot work on any, but such as measure God by themselves. The Argument if true, is Infinite, and has no bounds.

It does seem to agree much better with the Jewish Oeconomy, that an Infallibility should have been lodg'd among them. Their being Typical, it was much more reasonable to have expected an Oral Tradition of its signification. Their Prophets express'd themselves in a very dark and figurative way, full of strange Allusions, and lofty Phrases; and since these were to lead them to the *Messias*, and yet seem capable of very different Senses, all this required an

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Infallible Expounder. They were one Nation, ſo that Unity was in many reſpects moſt neceſſary to their Preſervation; they were for many Ages ſtrongly ſet on Idolatry, ſo that a ſolemn, publick and Infallible Authority was the more
17. Deut. neceſſary. There were alſo proviſions in their Law, much more expreſs than
8,9,10,11, any can be pretended in the *New Teſtament*, requiring them *when they had any*
12, 13. *Controverſies within their Gates*, to come up to the Temple *to the Prieſt that ſtood there, to miniſter before the Lord*, as well as to the Judge; and they were upon pain of death to ſubmit to their Determinations. This matter is ſet out in ſuch a variety of large and poſitive Expreſſions, that tho perhaps that paſſage belongs to their *Law Suits*, (But by the way, that of *tell the Church*, ſeems to be limited to the ſame ſort of matters) yet if a parity of Reaſon, or if the Letter of the Law is conſider'd, this will go much further towards an abſolute Submiſſion, which ſeems to ſuppoſe an Infallible Authority, than any thing that can be alledged for the like out of the *New Teſtament*; not to mention other Expreſſions of *asking the Law at the Prieſt's mouth, and that his Lips ſhould preſerve knowledge, for he was the Miniſter of the Lord*
2. Mal. 7. *of Hoſts*: Theſe things, I ſay, ſeem to make out a very fair Title to Infallibility under the Moſaical Diſpenſation; and they continu'd to be not only the *True*, but indeed the *Only Church* that God had on Earth, till the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel was opened: They had ſtill among them the Federal Means of Salvation, which is all that is neceſſary to the Being of a *Church*. Our Saviour join'd both in Temple and Synagogue-Worſhip, which alone is enough to prove them to have been a true Church.

In this we plainly ſee the Sophiſtry of one Argument, which perhaps makes ſome Impreſſion on weak minds, That a *True Church* muſt be *true* in its Doctrine: it muſt indeed have thoſe things that are neceſſary to keep up its Federal Relation to *God*; ſo the *Jews* had their Circumciſion and Sacrifices, together with the reſt of the Temple-Service: But yet that Church had fallen under two great Errors, that had a vaſt Extent, as well as a very fatal Conſequence. They underſtood all the Prophecies of the *Meſſias* in a literal ſenſe of a Temporal Prince, and a Glorious Conqueror. Here Oral Tradition fail'd, in that, which of all other things was the moſt important for them to underſtand aright, ſince their miſtakes in this occaſion'd their rejecting the *True Meſſias*, which drew on their final Ruin. The other Error was alſo very fatal, for it brought them under a vaſt Corruption of their Morals. They thought the ritual part of their Religion was of ſuch high Value in the ſight of God, that this alone, together with many invented Rites that had been handed down to them by *Tradition*, were of ſuch Value in the ſight of God, that they did compenſate for the groſſeſt Immoralities, and excuſe from the moſt important Obligations of the Moral Law. Theſe things had paſs'd down among them by Tradition from their Fathers, and had corrupted all their Notions about Religion: ſo that here we ſee all the arguings from a ſeeming neceſſity of things for an Infallible Authority, are only vain Imaginations, which do not hold in Inſtances, in which we have all the plauſible Reaſons of looking for them.

Nor does it appear, that it is any greater Imputation on the Goodneſs of God, that he has not provided an Infallible Remedy againſt *Error*, than that he has not provided an Infallible Remedy againſt *Sin*. *Sin* is that which of its own nature bears the greateſt oppoſition to the Attributes of God, and to his Dominion. and that does defile and corrupt our Souls the moſt.

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We can much more easily apprehend, that God can bear with a man that lives in *Error*, than with one that lives in *Sin*: The one can consist with good Intentions and a Probity and Integrity of heart; for he who is in *Error*, may think that he is serving God in it, and so it can dwell in the same breast with *the Love of God, and of our Neighbour*, which are driven out by *Sin*. The true design of Religion, is to give us such degrees of Light and Knowledge, as may preserve us from *Sin*, and purify our Hearts and Lives. Holiness is a much more certain Character of a man's being in the favour of God, than all the degrees of Knowledge possible. Upon all these grounds we may conclude, that there is no reason to think, that God should have made a more certain Provision against *Error*, than he has made against *Sin*. Now what are the Provisions against *Sin*? God offers the free pardon of all past sins, to encourage us to forsake them; he gives us secret Assistances to fortify our Endeavours against sin; he sets before us unspeakably vast Rewards and Punishments; and he accepts of a sincere, tho imperfect Obedience; so here a great deal is left to the freedom of our Wills. God will not work in us as in necessary Agents; but having made us capable of Liberty, he leaves us to the use of it, and if we perish, our perdition is of our selves. And therefore, if we will not apply our Faculties, and use our best Endeavours to become truly Holy, the blame must lie upon our selves; for God will not convey into us by his Power, such Principles and Dispositions as shall force us to be good; and unless we do what lies in us at the same time, that we pray to him for inward Aid from him, we have no reason to hope that he will hear us.

In like manner, He has call'd us to a Religion that lies in a very little compass; he has order'd it to be deliver'd to us in Books, writ in a great simplicity of Style; he has given us Understandings capable of knowledge, and of great Industry in the pursuit of it; and we feel this difference in our natures, in seeking after Truth, from following after Holiness; that there is no natural disposition in us to Error, or against Truth; whereas there are born in us Propensities, that we feel to be deeply rooted in us against Holiness, and in favour of sin. Among men, some are naturally inquisitive, made and fitted to dive deep into profound Searches; these men do in Religion, as well as in all other Arts and Sciences, so open and clear the way to slower and lazier minds, that they render things easy to them. And as we have no reason to imagine, that God should have laid insuperable Difficulties in the way to Divine Knowledge; so those few that are in it, have been so overcome by the men of Labour and Learning, that even the Church that boasts of Infallibility, would have made a small progress without their Endeavours. And why should we imagine, that a Religion which we feel to be so hard in practice, should be made so easy in the speculative part, that we should be in no danger, and need no Industry to understand it.

A Promise of the Spirit is indeed pretended, that the Church should be thereby guided *into all Truth*. But it is to be consider'd, that this Promise was made personally to the Apostles, who were Inspir'd, and so were infallibly guided, which appears more plainly from the following words, and *he shall shew you things to come*; that is clearly a promise of the Spirit of Prophesy, to which, since no Body of men can now pretend, they cannot claim the other neither; for both must go together, according to the force of those works: Nor is there any reason from those words to conclude, that this, any more than

16. John. 13.

the Inſpiration of the Apoſtles, was to deſcend to others after them; or if any will, through a parity of Reaſon think, that this was to continue in the Church, why ſhould it not belong to every Chriſtian, and not be confin'd to any Body or Succeſſion of men? eſpecially ſince thoſe who think that the ſame parity will hold as to the other effects of the Spirit promis'd there, of its *dwelling in them*, *of bringing things to their remembrance*, *of giving them Comfort*, *Peace*, *Joy and Victory over the World*, and that theſe do deſcend to others after the Apoſtles, do believe that they belong to all Chriſtians, and are not to be contracted to a ſmall number. Now if all the other promiſes were to deſcend thus, why not this of being *led into all Truth*, as well as the reſt? For all promiſes, even tho expreſs'd in poſitive words, do carry a condition naturally in them: ſo that when this promiſe is believ'd to belong to all Chriſtians, yet it is not abſolute, but ſuppoſes men's uſing their utmoſt Endeavours with an honeſt and good Mind; in which caſe no man can deny, but that whether that promiſe was ſpecially meant to them or not, yet it ſhall be ſo far accompliſh'd in them, that they ſhall be left in no Error that ſhall be fatal to them; but that either they ſhall be deliver'd from it, or that it ſhall be forgiven them, ſince it is inconſiſtent with the Notion of infinite Goodneſs, that any man ſhould periſh, who is doing all he can in order to his Salvation.

If it be ſaid, That *Error* does diſturb the Peace and Order of the Church, beyond what is to be apprehended from *Sin*. *Error* runs men into parties, and out of thoſe, Factions do ariſe, which break not only the Peace of the Church, but the whole order of the World, and the Quiet of Civil Society: whereas *Sin* does only harm to thoſe who are guilty of it, or to a few who may be corrupted by their ill example. But to this it is to be anſwer'd, That *Sin* does naturally much more miſchief to Mankind, than *Error*: he that errs, if he is not Immoral with it, is quiet and peaceable in his Error: therefore ſtill the greateſt miſchief is from Sin, which corrupts men's Natures through its own Influence. And the miſchief that *Error* does procure, ariſes chiefly from the pretenſions to Infallibility, or ſomething that is near a-kin to it; for if men were ſuffer'd to go on in their Errors with the ſame undiſturbed quiet that they have for moſt of their ſins, they would probably be much quieter in them; ſince *Sin* of its nature is a much fiercer thing than a point of Speculation can be ſuppos'd to be: but if men apprehend Inquiſitions, or other Miſeries, upon the account of their Opinions, then they ſtand together, and combine for their own Defence and Preſervation; ſo that it is not from the Errors themſelves, but from the methods of treating them, that all thoſe Convulſions have ariſen, which have ſo violently ſhaken Churches and Kingdoms.

But the laſt and Main thing that is urg'd on this Head is, That no private Underſtanding is ſtrong enough to find out Truth, in all the points of Religion: that it is an indecent and an inſolent thing for private men, for Tradeſmen perhaps, or for Women, to pretend to expound Scripture, or to judge in points of Religion: This feeds Pride and ſelf-conceit beyond any thing that can be imagin'd; whereas a Spirit of Submiſſion and Humility, of thinking others, particularly Superiours, wiſer than our ſelves, has ſo great a reſemblance to the Spirit of the Goſpel, and ſeems to agree ſo well with the deſign of this Religion, that we muſt believe it to be a part of it. This is indeed ſpecious; but after all, it is to be conſider'd, that God has made us of ſuch a nature, that our apprehenſions of things muſt determine us whether we will or not;

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and it is not likely that God would make us as he has done, and yet at the same time so limit our Faculties, that they should not be imploy'd in the Matters of Religion. We naturally love Freedom, and we believe things the more firmly, the more profoundly we have inquir'd into them; when we come to be once fully satisfi'd about them; when we find our selves oft call'd on in the Scriptures to *search them*, *to prove all things*, *to try the Spirits*; when we see a great part of the *New Testament* was directed to whole Churches, to *all the Saints*, that is, to the whole Body of the Christians; when so much of it is writ in the Style of one, that argues, that descends from that Apostolical Authority by which he might have commanded those he writes to, to receive and rest in his Decisions; and that lays things in their natural Connexions and Consequences before those he writes to; we see in that such an appeal to their Reasons, and that even in the Age of Miracles, in which there was another sort of Characters of the Divine Commission, that render'd the Apostles Infallible; when I say, this Appeal was made to their Reasons and Understandings at that time, it seems much more reasonable, that in the succeeding Ages men should have a right to imploy their Faculties in finding out the Sense, and examining the Books of the *New Testament*.

Here let us consider the state of every *Jew* at that time, and see if this reasoning for Authority and Infallibility was not then as strong to keep him in Judaism. There was a Controversy between the Apostles and the *Sanhedrim*, whether *Jesus* was the *Messias*, or not? A decision of this was in a great measure to be made from the Prophecies in the *Old Testament* concerning the *Messias*, which were urg'd by the Apostles; but the *Rabbies*, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, put other senses on these. Now what was a private *Jew* to do? Must he take upon him to judge so intricate a Controversy? Must he pretend to be wiser than all the Doctors of their Law, or the Conveyers of their Traditions to them? Must he set up his Skill and Reason above theirs? Thus we see that if this Reasoning is true, it being founded on Maxims that are equally true at all times, then it was as true at that time as it is now. It is of no force to say, that the Miracles which our Saviour and his Apostles wrought, gave them such Powers, that the people were upon that account bound to believe them, rather than their Teachers: For one part of the Debate was, both the truth of the Miracles, and the Consequences that arose from them. So the Appeal, according to this way of Reasoning, did still lie to their *Sanhedrim*.

In a word, In such Matters every man must judge for himself, and every man must answer to God for the Judgment that he has made; he judges for no body else, but for himself. He, and He only can be the Judge; and if he uses a due degree of Industry, and frees himself from every corrupt Bias, from Pride, Vain-glory, and affectation of Singularity, or the pursuing any ill ends; under those appearances of searching for Truth, and the adhering to it, he is doing the best thing, which according to that nature of which God has made him, he can do; and so he may reasonably believe, that he shall succeed in it: Nor is there any pride in this, for a man to think according to his own Understanding, no more than to see with his own Eyes. His Humility ought to make him slow and cautious, modest and fearful; but no humility can oblige him to think otherwise than he feels he must needs think.

Among the *Works of the flesh*, *Heresies* or *Sects* are reckon'd as one sort and species. Now by *Works of the flesh*, are to be understood the appetites of a

vicious and depraved nature: the meaning therefore of reckoning *Heresies* a-
5. Gal. 20. mong these is this, That when a man out of a bad disposition of mind, and on ill designs, chuses to be of a party, he then is a Heretick; but he that in sincerity of Heart goes into persuasions, from an overcoming sense of their Truth, cannot be one, because he does not chuse his persuasion out of a previous ill design; but is of it, not out of choice, but necessity; since his Understanding, in which those matters may be variously represented, offers them so to him, that he must believe them to be true, in the same manner in which he apprehends them.

If upon this Principle there happen to be many *Sects* and *Divisions* in the Church, this is a part of that *Woe* that Christ left upon the World, by reason of *Offences and Scandals*; for he forsaw that they *must needs come*. God has made this present Scene of Life, to be neither regular nor secure: The strange Follies and Corruptions of Mankind must have their Influence on Religion, as well as they have on all other things. God has reserv'd a fulness of Light and of unerring Knowledge to another State: Here we are in the dark, but have light enough, if we have honest Minds to use and improve it aright, to guide us thither; and that is the utmost share that God seems to have design'd for us in this Life: we must therefore be contented, and make the most of it that we can.

I go next to shew, That the same Difficulties, if not greater ones, lie upon those who build on Infallibility: for before they can arrive at the use of it, they must have well examin'd, and be fully assur'd of two things, either of which has greater Difficulties in it, than all those put together with which they press us. First, They must be convinced that there is an Infallibility in the Church; and next, they must know to which of those many Churches into which *Christendom* is divided, this Infallibility is fastned. Unless the design is to make all men take their Religion implicitely from their Forefathers, these things must be well consider'd: If men are oblig'd to adhere blindly to the Religion in which they were bred, then *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* must continue still where they are. If this had been the Maxim of all times, Christianity had never got into the World.

If then men are allow'd to examine things, they must have very good reason given them for it, before they can believe that there is an Infallibility among men: Their own Reason and Observation offers so much against it, that without very clear grounds they ought not to receive it. Now the reasons to persuade it, must be drawn either from Scripture, or from outward visible Characters that evidence it. The Scriptures cannot be urg'd by these men, because the Scriptures, as they teach, have their Authority from the Testimony of the Church; Therefore the *Authority of the Church* must be first prov'd, for the Church cannot give an Authority to a Book, and then prove its own Authority by that Book: This is plainly to prove the Church by her own Testimony, which is manifestly absurd; it being all one, whether she affirms it immediately; or if she affirms it, by affirming a Book in which it is contain'd; here a Circle is made to run for ever round in, Why do you believe the Church? because the Scriptures affirm it; and why do you believe the Scriptures? because the Church affirms them. I do not deny, but they may urge the Scriptures for this, very pertinently against us, who acknowledge their Authority: but I am now considering upon what grounds a man is to be instructed,

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in the stating the grounds of his own Faith, and resolving it into Principles. In this an Order must be fix'd, and in the progress of it, every step that is made must be prov'd without any relation to that, which is afterwards to be proved out of that: and therefore, either the *Church* or the *Scriptures* must be first prov'd, and then other things must be prov'd out of that which is once fix'd and made good.

But in the next place, if we should suffer them to bring Proofs from Scripture, how shall it be prov'd that the true sense of them is that which makes for infallibility? Other senses may be given to them, which may both agree to the Grammatical Construction of the words, to the contexture of the Discourse, and to the Phraseology of the Scriptures: who shall then decide this Matter? It were very unreasonable to prove what is their true Sense by the Exposition that any Church puts on those passages in her own favour; that were to make her both Judge and Party in too gross a manner. Therefore at last those passages, and all that relates to them, must fall under the private Judgment: and in these Instances, every man must be suffer'd to expound the Scriptures for himself; for he cannot be bound to submit to any exposition of them, but that which satisfies his own Reason: and if this step is once admitted, then it will appear as reasonable to leave a man, all over, to the use of his Faculties; since these passages, and that which necessarily relates to them, will lead a man into the understanding of the hardest parts of the whole *New Testament*.

If this method is let go, they must prove the Infallibility of the Church by Arguments drawn from some other *Visible Characters*, by which a man is to be convinc'd that God has made her Infallible: If there were such eminent ones, as the gift of Tongues, Miracles or Prophecies, that did visibly attest this, here were a proof that were solid indeed; It were the same with that, by which we prove the Truth of the Christian Religion: But then, these Miracles must be as uncontestedly and evidently proved; they must also belong to this point, that is, they must be Miracles publickly done to prove the truth of this Assertion. But to this Appeal they will not stand, what use soever they may make of it to amuse the weaker and the more credulous. The Character of an uninterrupted Succession from the days of the Apostles, is neither an easier nor a surer one, since other Churches whom they condemn, have it likewise; nor can it be search'd into by a private man, unless he would go into that Sea of examining the History, the Records and Succession of Churches. This is an Enquiry that has in it, Difficulties vastly greater and more insuperable, than all those that they can object to us. If they will appeal to the vast Extent of a Church, that so many Nations and Societies agree in the same Doctrine, and are of one Communion; this will prove to be a dangerous point; for in the state in which we see Mankind, Numbers make a very bad Argument. It were to risque the *Christian Religion* too much, to venture on a Poll with the *Mahometans*: In some Ages the *Semi-Arrians* had the better at numbers, and it is a question, if at this day, those that are within or without the *Roman* Communion make the greatest body: Nor must a man be put to chuse his Religion by such a laborious and uncertain way of Calculation.

To plead a continuance in the same Doctrine that was at first deliver'd to the Church by the Apostles, is to put the matter upon a more desperate issue: For as no man can hope to see to the end of this, so it lets a man in, into

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all Controverſies; when he is to compare the preſent Doctrine with that which was deliver'd by the Apoſtles. Let then any Character be aſſign'd that ſhall oblige a man to believe the Church Infallible, and it will ſoon appear very evidently, that the ſearching into that, muſt put the world on more difficult Enquiries, than any of thoſe, that we are preſſed with: and that in the iſſue of the whole, the determination muſt be reſolv'd into a private Judgment.

Another Difficulty follows cloſe upon this, which is, In what Church this Infallibility is to be found? Suppoſe a man was born in the *Greek Church*, at any time ſince the IX. Century, how ſhall he know that he muſt ſeek the Infallibility in the *Roman* Communion, and that he cannot find it in his own? He plainly ſees, that the Chriſtian Religion began in the Eaſtern parts; and by every ſtep that he makes into Hiſtory, he clearly diſcerns that it flouriſhed for many Ages moſt eminently there; but now that there is a breach between them and the *Latins*, he cannot judge to which Communion he is to adhere, without he examines the Doctrine: for both have the outward Characters of a Succeſſion of Martyrs and Biſhops, of Numbers, and an appearance of continuing in the ſame Doctrine; only with this difference, that the *Greeks* have the advantage in every one of theſe: they have more Apoſtolical Churches, I mean founded by the Apoſtles, than the *Latins*; and they have ſtuck more firmly, with fewer Additions and Innovations, to their Ancient Rituals, than the *Latins* have done: How can he then decide this matter, without examining the grounds of their difference, and making a private Judgment upon a private Examination of the Scriptures or other Authorities? If it be ſaid, that the preſent depreſs'd and ignorant ſtate of thoſe Churches makes it now very ſenſible, that there can be no Infallibility among the Eaſterns. To this it is to be anſwer'd, that I have put the caſe all-along from the 9th. Century downward; In many of thoſe Ages the *Greeks* were under as good Circumſtances, and had as fair an appearance as the *Latins* had, if not better: for the outward appearances of the *Roman* Communion in the next Centuries, the 10th. and 11th. are not very favourable, even by the Repreſentation that their own Writers have made of them; and if we muſt judge of the Infallibility of a Church by outward Characters, it may be urg'd with great ſhews of Reaſon, that a Church which under all its Poverty and Perſecutions, does ſtill adhere to the Chriſtian Religion, has ſo peculiar a Character of *bearing the Croſs*, and of living in a conſtant ſtate of Sufferings, that if Infallibility be in the Church as a favour and priviledge from God; and not as the effect of human Learning and other Advantages, I ſhould ſooner believe the *Greek Church* Infallible, than any other now in the World.

But when theſe difficulties are all got over, there remain yet new and great ones. Suppoſe one is ſatisfi'd that it is in the *Roman* Church; he muſt know where to find it: without this, it is of no more uſe to him, than if one ſhould tell a hungry man that there is food enough for him, without directing him where to ſeek for it; he muſt ſtarve after all that general Information, if he has not a more particular direction. And therefore it ſeems very abſurd to affirm, that the believing of Infallibility is an *Article of Faith*, but that the proper Subject in whom it reſts, is not likewiſe an *Article of Faith*. This is the general Tenet of the whole *Roman* Communion, who that they may maintain their Union, notwithſtanding their difference in this, do all agree in ſaying, that

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the ſubject of this Infallibility is not a matter of Faith. This deſtroys the whole pretenſion; for all the Abſurdities, of no end of Controverſies, of private Judgment, and every man's expounding the Scriptures, do return here, and the whole deſign of Infallibility is defeated: For how can a man be bound to ſubmit to this in any one Inſtance, or to receive any propoſition as coming from an Infallible Authority, if he does not know who has it? Thus, according to that Maxim of Natural Logick, that a Concluſion can have no certainty beyond that which was in both the Premiſes; if it is not certain with whom the Infallibility dwells, as well as that there is an Infallibility in the Church, all the noiſe about it will be quite defeated, and of no uſe: If a man had many Medecines, of which one was an Infallible Cure of ſuch or ſuch Diſeaſes, can it be ſuppos'd that he would communicate theſe to the World, and tell that one of them was infallible, without ſpecifying which of theſe was the infallible one? There are ſome things that look ſo extravagant, that really it is an abſurd thing to ſuppoſe them, of which this ſeems to be evidently one, That God ſhould have left an Infallibility to his Church, and not have declar'd with whom this, the greateſt of all Truſts, to which probably many would pretend, was lodged. So that this, which is the general Doctrine of the whole *Roman* Communion, has an abſurdity in it that cannot be reconcil'd to common ſenſe and reaſon. *Many* among them put it in the whole diffuſive body of all Chriſtians; to which purpoſe the words of *Vincentius Lirinenſis* are perpetually repeated; but after all, this is only to abuſe people: for if the ſenſe of the Church in all Places and Ages muſt be ſought for, here come endleſs enquiries, and ſome of them cannot poſſibly be made, the Hiſtory of many Ages and Churches being loſt. If this is made the Standard, as the labour becomes Infinite, ſo after all, it reſolves into private Judgment, ſince every man muſt judge as he ſees cauſe, and muſt collect the ſenſe of Ages and Churches from Authors, which as they are often both dark and defective, ſo he muſt underſtand them as well as he can, by his own Judgment and Obſervation, unleſs ſome Infallible Expounder, or Declarer of their Senſe, is ſet up, and then the Infallibility is tranſlated from hence to the Expounder. And indeed, it is ſo hard to trace a great many points of Controverſy, thro even the firſt and beſt Ages, that the Church muſt fall under great Difficulties, if this *Hypotheſis* is aſſum'd for maintaining the Infallibility. And when all is done, we ſee by the performances of the Writers of Controverſy, that both ſides think they can juſtify themſelves by the Ancient Fathers as well as by the Scriptures: So that all theſe Abſurdities that are urg'd againſt apealing to the Scriptures, or arguing from them, as that to which all Hereticks do fly, and in which they ſhelter themſelves, will return here with the more force; becauſe theſe Writings are much more Voluminous, and are writ in a much more entangl'd and darker Style; ſo that theſe two Objections lie againſt this way, That it is both vaſt, if not impoſſible as to the performance of it; and next, that after all the pains that can be taken in it, it is of no uſe, for private Judgment will ſtill remain; ſo that Controverſies cannot be ended in this way. Others are for the diffuſive Church of the preſent Age, and put Infallibility there: for they reckon thus; That every Age of the Church believes as the former Age believ'd, till this is carried up to the Apoſtles themſelves. This is to reſolve all matters into *Oral Tradition*, and to ſuppoſe It infallible: and indeed, if we can believe that the generality of *Chriſtians* have in all Ages been wiſe, honeſt and cautious, and that the generality

rality of the *Clergy* have in all Ages been faithful and inquisitive, we may rely upon this, and so believe an Infallibility: But at the same time, and upon this Supposition, we shall have no occasion for it; since if Mankind could be brought to such a pitch of Reformation, there would be no Controversies, and so no need of a Judge to decide them Infallibly: But if we will admit that, which we see to be true, and know to have been true in all Ages, that men are apt to be both ignorant and careless of Religion; that they go easily into such Opinions as are laid before them by men of Authority and Reputation; and that they have a particular liking to superstitious Conceits, to outward Pomp, and to such Doctrines as make them easy in their ill practices; then the supposition of every Age's believing nothing but that which it learn'd from the former, falls quite to the ground. If we can also imagine, that the Clergy have been always careful to examine Matters, and never apt to add explanations or enlargements even in their own favours; or if on the contrary, we see a gross Ignorance running through whole Ages; if we find the Clergy to have been ambitious and quarrelsome, full of Intrigues and Interests, then all this general specious prejudice in favour of *Oral Tradition*, vanishes to nothing. All this will be easier to be conceiv'd, if we state aright the difference between those times and our own. Now, Printing has made Learning cheap and easy, the disposition of Posts, the commerce of Letters, the daily publication of Gazettes and Journals, fill the World with the knowledge of such things as are now in agitation. But when all was to be learn'd from Manuscripts, Knowledge was both dear and difficult; and the methods of communicating with the rest of the World, were both slow, and often broken; so that this thread of *Oral Tradition* will not prove a sure Guide.

There is an humour in men to add to most things, as they pass through their hands; if it were but an Illustration, which seems not only innocent, but sometimes necessary: Those Enlargements would very naturally be soon consider'd as parts of the Doctrine: and to these in a constant gradation, new Additions might still be made, and Inferences from Illustrations would in conclusion become parts of their Doctrine. If I did not limit my self in this Discourse, it were easy to apply this both to the Doctrines of Redeeming out of Purgatory, to those of praying for the dead, or invocating Saints, and the worship of Images. It is confest by the Asserters of this *Hypothesis*, that the whole face of the *Latin* Church is chang'd both in her Worship and Discipline; tho these are more sensible things, than points of meer Speculation, which in dark Ages could not be much minded; whereas the other are more visible, and make a more powerful Impression; besides, that all those changes arise out of some new Opinions to which they related, and on which they are founded: A change then that is confess'd to be made in the one, does very naturally carry us to believe that a change was also made in the other. We do all plainly see, that some Traditions that come very near the Age of the Apostles, and that seem to be Expositions of some parts of the *New Testament*, were chang'd in other Ages. The belief of Christ's reigning a Thousand years on earth, is one of these; for which, tho it is now laid aside in that Church, there is another face of a Venerable Tradition, than for most of their Doctrines. We see a practice that was very Ancient, and that continu'd very long, which arose out of the Exposition of those words, *Except ye eat my Flesh, and drink my Blood, ye*

6. Joh. 53.

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have no life in you, by which Infants were made partakers of the *Eucharist*, was afterwards chang'd in that Church; tho it is much less easy to think how that should be done, than almost how any other should be brought about: for those words being understood of an Indispensible necessity of the Sacrament to Salvation, and all Parents having naturally a very tender Concern for their Children, nothing but an absolute Authority, against which no man durst so much as whisper, could have brought the world to have parted with this. It were easy to carry this to many other Instances, and to shew, that not only Ritual Traditions, but Doctrinal ones, such as were found on Explanations of passages of Scripture, have varied. It were perhaps too invidious to send men to *Petavius*, to find in him how much the Tradition of the several Ages has vari'd in the greatest Articles of the Christian Doctrine. It is no less certain, that *Origen* laid down a Scheme with relation to the Liberty of man's Will, and the Providence of God, that came to be so universally receiv'd by the *Greek Church*, that both *Nazianzen* and *Basil* drew a sort of System out of his Doctrine, in which those Opinions were asserted, and large Quotations were gather'd out of him, explaining them with most of the Difficulties that do arise out of them: and as this Book had not only *Origen*'s own Authority to support it, but likewise that of those two great Men who compil'd it; so it passed down, and was the uncontested Doctrine of the *Greek Church*: But St. *Austin* being engag'd into Disputes with *Pelagius*, fram'd a new System that had never been thought of before him; and yet the Worth and Labours of that Father gave it so a vast Reputation, that this was look'd on in several Ages as the Doctrine of the Church; and Learning vanishing at that time, the *Roman* Empire being then over-run by *Barbarians*, his Book came to be so much read, and so universally receiv'd, that it gave no small suspicion, if any one oppos'd his Tenets: yet *Cassian*, who was a *Greek*, and was form'd in their Notions, writ a Book of *Conferences*, which contain'd the Precepts of a Monastick State of life, that were digested in so good a method, and writ with so true an Elevation, that it is perhaps one of the best Books that the Ancients have left us. This came to be held in such Esteem, that all the Monks read it with a particular Attention and Regard. In it the Doctrine of *Origen* and the *Greek* Church was so fully set forth, that this, and perhaps this alone, kept up a secret opposition to St. *Austin*'s Doctrine, tho that came to receive a vast strengthening from *Aquinas* and the Schoolmen that follow'd him: and yet at the time that *Luther* and *Calvin*, in opposition to the Church of *Rome*, built much upon St. *Austin*'s Authority, almost all all that writ against them, argu'd according to the Sentiments of the *Greek* Church: but those of *Louvain*, and the Orders of the *Dominicans* and *Augustinians* did so maintain St. *Austins* and *Aquinas*'s Doctrine, that tho it was not liked, because it seem'd to be too near theirs who were to be condemn'd as *Heretick*s; yet the Council of *Trent* seem'd still to stick to St. *Austin*. Since that time the *Jesuits* Order, who tho they at first set up for St. *Austin*'s Doctrine, yet since have chang'd their minds, and taken themselves to the other side, have by their Influence both at *Rome* and in other Courts, so chang'd the Sense of the greater part of that Church, that it is plain, tho St. *Austin*'s Name is too great to be openly disparaged, yet they are now generally in the contrary *Hypothesis*.

This I only instance to shew, that in Speculative Points it is no hard matter

to make multitudes go from one Opinion to another, and to alter the Tradition of the Church, that is, to bring one Age of the Church to think otherwise than another did. But after all, *Oral Tradition* cannot be ſet up as the Judge of Controverſies, much leſs as the living and ſpeaking Judge, it is no real being, nor do we know where to find it: The Tradition of one Body among them differs from another, as in the point of the Immaculate Conception of the Bleſſed Virgin, in which an Opinion has been lately ſtarted, which is now receiv'd into all their Rituals, and has given occaſion to many Acts of Worſhip and publick Devotions, which is moſt expreſly contrary to all Ancient Tradition; and yet is become now ſo Sacred, that the whole *Dominican* Order feels no ſmall Inconvenience by their being oblig'd, as the Followers of *Aquinas*, to maintain the contrary. The Traditions of one Nation are queſtion'd by another, particularly in this important Point of the Subject of this Infallibity. It is alſo impoſſible for any man to find this out; muſt he ſuſpend his Opinion till he has gone round the Church, to ask every man what he was bred to? This, as it could not be ſuffer'd, ſo it could not be ſo fully found out, as to put a man in the way to end all Controverſies; in this a private Judgment muſt again come in: For tho it were granted that *Oral Tradition* is a Rule to judge Controverſies by, it can never be pretended that it is the *living and ſpeaking Judge* that muſt determine them.

I come now to the two more receiv'd Opinions in this matter; the one puts it in a General Council, and the other puts it in the Pope; and both the one and the other pretend that the *Church Repreſentative* is in them. As for the pretence of ſome who ſeem to make a Third party, and believe it to be in a Council confirm'd by the Pope; this is only a plauſible way of putting it wholly in the Pope; for if the Definitions of a Council have no Infallibility in them, till the Pope's Conſent and Approbation is given; then it is plain, that all the Infallibility is in him, and that he only chuſes to exert it in that ſolemn way: For either Chriſt gave it to St. *Peter* and his Succeſſors, or he gave it not; if he gave it not, that pretenſion is out of doors; if he gave it to them, we plainly ſee no Limitations in the grant; and whatſoever Rules or Methods may have become authoris'd by Practice and Cuſtom, they are only Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitutions, but can never be ſuppos'd to limit Chriſt's Grant, or to give any ſhare of it to others.

It will be to no purpoſe to object here, That as ſome Conſtitutions, our own in particular, are ſo fram'd, that the *Legiſlative* Authority, tho it flows only from the *King*, yet is limited to ſuch a Method, that it cannot be exerted but with the Concurrence of *Lords and Commons*, ſo it may be alſo in the Church; and thus the Pope can only uſe his Infallibility in Concurrence with a General Council, or at leaſt, that both together are Infallible. But tho human Societies may model themſelves as to their Legiſlation which way they will, this will only prove, that as to the Government and Adminiſtration of the Church, ſhe may put her ſelf into ſuch a method as may be thought moſt regular and expedient; and thus the Council of *Nice* limited the *Biſhops of a Province*, to do nothing without the conſent of the *Metropolitan*: yet whatever may be done in ſubaltern Bodies, where things that are done amiſs may be rectifi'd by Appeals, the Supream and laſt Reſort muſt be left to the full freedom in which Chriſt has conſtituted his Church. It muſt be further conſider'd, That Infallibility is not like ordinary Juriſdiction or Legiſlation, which may be mould-

ed according to the conveniences of Society; it is a Priviledge, which if the Church has it at all, she has it by an immediate Grant from Heaven; and so she must enjoy and apply it according to the Ten or ofthat *Grant*, and she cannot expect to have it continu'd to her, but as she observes the nature of the *Grant*. Indeed if it were given her at large, to be modell'd and lodg'd as she pleases, there might be a power in her to limit the use of it to such forms as should be least liable to Exception or Abuse: But either it is granted to a single person, or to the body in general: If it is granted to a single person, then he, and he only has it. He may indeed, if he pleases, in order to his being better inform'd or obey'd, call a *General Council*; but their proceedings are only preparatory to his using the *Infallibility*, which is singly in himself: Nor can the Divine Grant be limited as to the exercise or use of it; all such Rules must still be at the Pope's discretion. On the other hand, If the *Grant* is given to the Community of the Pastors, then the *Infallibility* must be in them, and cannot be limited or supposed to stay for the Consent of any one Bishop; for whatsoever regard may he had to any one man, by reason of the Dignity of his *See*, or his other Circumstances; yet still this must be but a point or form of human Prudence: for the *Infallibility* must be where Christ has placed it, and cannot be transferr'd from thence, or be put any where else: So unless it is said, that Christ has put this Infallibility between Pope and Council in so express a manner, as all Constitutions do, which are under a mixed Legislation, which is not pretended; then it must be lodged either in a General Council, or in the Pope, and cannot be in both. This then is to be examin'd in the next place.

I begin therefore to examine the Plea for the Infallibility of Councils. It is at first no small prejudice against this Opinion, that the Church was Constituted, and had continu'd 300. years before any thing that has the shadow of a General Council was call'd: so if an infallible Judge of Controversies be necessary to the Church, here we see she subsisted, in her hardest times, in which she was the most distrest both by Heresies and Persecutions, without one. We also see, that she has been these last 130. years without one, tho there are warm Disputes among them, both in Speculative and Practical Doctrines, both sides reproaching one another with Heresy: and as there is little prospect of a Council, neither the Court of *Rome*, nor the Courts of other Princes, who have among them taken away all the Primitive and Canonical Rights of the Church, which an honest Council must desire to regain, being concern'd ever to have one: So if a Council were necessary, it is not very easy to see how it should be brought together. During the Greatness of the *Roman* Empire, it was in the Emperor's power to have brought the Bishops together at his pleasure; but now this depends upon the Pope, who summons them, having obtain'd the consent of the Princes of *Christendom*, which is subdivided into many different Soveraignties. This Matter depending then so entirely upon the See of *Rome*, there is no reason to look for one from them; for they pretending to have the Infallibility in themselves, should very much derogate from that, if they summon'd a Council for a decision in Doctrinal Matters, they being in possession of judging these at *Rome*: And as for Matters of Discipline, except we can imagine, that they will be content to part with that Authority which they have assum'd over all Sees and Churches, and over all the Canons of the Church, we cannot see reason to fancy that they will ever call one. If they should, the

consent of all Soveraigns must likewise be obtain'd; for it being a part of the Civil Authority, to keep Subjects within the Princes Dominions, they cannot be oblig'd to send their Bishops and Divines to a Council, unless they please. This is a power which seems to belong to them, it is certain they claim it, and very probably would put it in execution, if that matter came to be contested: So here are very great Contingencies to be conquer'd before a General Council can be brought together. Now it is not very likely that Christ should have left so great and so necessary a power to his Church, by which all Controversies must be judged, which yet must be at the mercy of so many Accidents before it can be brought to work; and that the bringing together of those Councils should depend so entirely upon them, against whose Pretensions or Usurpations it seems to be most necessary.

But to go more closely to this Opinion, If the Infallibility lies in a General Council, it is first necessary that we know who are the Members that must constitute this Council; whether the Laity have a right to be in it, and to judge, or not? We find the *Brethren* as well as the *Elders* join'd with the Apostles in that first Council, to which all subsequent Councils pretend they have succeeded, and whose Style, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us*, is one of the Foundations of this Authority. Why then are the *Brethren*, or the *whole Church*, that is, *Lay Christians*, whom even the Apostles, tho Inspir'd, took to consult and judge with them; Why, I say, are they now excluded? It is also probable, that by *Elders* or *Presbyters*, are to be meant those to whom that name was afterwards appropriated; why then are they shut out? In a word, If by a Divine Grant Infallibility belongs to a General Council, we have a just Right to ask for a Definition of the Council, by the same Authority; otherwise we may ascribe Infallibility to those to whom God never meant to give it. Must this Council consist of all the Bishops of the Christian Church? For tho this is both unreasonable, and scarce possible, yet if the Infallibility is given in common to the *Pastors* and *Bishops* of the Church, then it will be hard to shut out any from it, if because of their distance, their Age, or their Poverty, they cannot come to it; and if tho a general Summons is pretended, to give all men a right to come, yet it is certain, that only a few of those who have lived at a distance have come, even in the best Ages; those few will either be men of a greater degree, of Wealth, of Heat, or of Health, and will be probably men pickt out by their Princes, as the fittest to serve their ends. Now if the Divine Grant be to the whole Body, it will not be easy to shew, that even the most numerous of those Meetings, that pass for *General Councils*, were truly such. Or if it is said, that those few of remote Provinces come in the name of the rest, and so represent them; it must first appear, whether such a thing as *Infallibility* can be deputed: indeed where a Controversy is already known, Churches may send men fully instructed in their Doctrine, who may be thereby well impower'd to declare, how the Doctrine and Tradition has been setled among them: But if a Judgment is to be made upon the hearing of Parties, and the discussing their Reasons on both sides, which must be the case, otherwise here is no Infallible Judge; then in that case, men at a distance, who never heard the matter, but very generally and partially, cannot do this: therefore such as come to a Council, must have the full power of Judging. We know, that in Fact such Powers or Instructions are seldom

15. Act. 23. to 30.

given,

given, and in these latter Ages they will not at all be allow'd; for the Bishops so instructed, must be consider'd as the Proxies of their Principals, and vote in their name; which is contrary to the practice of all Councils, except that of *Basile*, and can never be endured at *Rome*, where every *Italian* Bishop, tho his See is in some places but a small Parish, is reckon'd in the Vote equal with any of those few that come from great Provinces.

Now these are all Difficulties of such weight, that it will not be easy to settle them with any Divine Warrants, the Scripture being silent as to all such matters. Nor is it clear, whether the whole Council must agree in the same Sentence; or if a major number, tho exceeding by one single voice, is sufficient. If the Council at *Jerusalem* is insisted on, as the Precedent to other Councils, we see that All agreed there: And if this Infallibility is a power that Christ has left in his Church, as necessary for her Peace and Preservation, it may be reasonable enough to suppose, that for giving their decisions the more Authority, he should so order this matter by his Providence, that they should all agree in their Judgments: For after all, when a thing is carri'd but by One vote, tho according to the Rules of all Human Courts, it must be good in Law; yet it is not easy to think, that God would lodge such an Authority, and suffer it to turn upon so small and so despicable an Inequality.

In conclusion, It does not appear from the Scriptures, whether in such decisions the Bishops should expect a Divine Inspiration, such as that which setled the Judgment in the Council of *Jerusalem*, or not. The meaning of those words, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to Us*, seems to be this; That as they of themselves were resolv'd on making that decision, so an immediate Inspiration, which was own'd by them all, did finally determine them in their Resolution: Or it may be suppos'd to relate to that Effusion of the Holy Ghost upon *Cornelius* and his Friends, that being a solemn Declaration, that men might be accepted of God, while they were yet uncircumcised; and that by consequence, the *Gentiles* were not bound to the observance of those Precepts, which did not oblige any but such as were circumcised. So that what they then decreed, was only a general Inference which they drew from that particular case: And so they made a decision in favour of all the *Gentiles*, from that which had happened to *Cornelius*. This is the clearest account that can be given of these words, which understood otherwise, look as if they had added their decision, as the giving a further weight to that made by the Holy Ghost, or as a Vehicle to convey it, which is too absurd to suppose: Now if any build upon that Council, they must make the parallel just, and shew that the Holy Ghost interposes in their Conclusions.

To all these Considerations we must add this, That the first Councils are to be supposed to have understood their own Authority; or at least the sense of the Church at that time concerning it. They considered the several Passages of Scripture, and framed their Decisions out of them; which were afterwards defended by some who had been of their Body; not as if their Authority or Decision had put an end to the Controversy. They urge indeed the great numbers of the Bishops that made those Decisions; but use that rather as a strong Inducement to beget a prejudice in their favour, than as an Authority that could not be contradicted. In this strain does *Athanasius* defend the Council

Athan. *de Decr. Sin. Nicen.*

Council of *Nice* : For indeed even that of *Numbers* was to be ſparingly urged, after the Council at *Arimini*, where Numbers were on the other ſide. The chief Writers of thoſe times make their Appeals to the Scriptures, they bring many Paſſages out of them, and are very ſhort and defective in making out the Doctrine of the Church from Tradition, or Fathers. *Athanaſius* names not above four, and theſe had lived very near that time; two of them, *Origen* and *Dionyſius*, were claimed by the other Side. There are but few, and very late Authorities, alledged in the Council of *Epheſus*; and thoſe at *Chalcedon* made their definition chiefly upon the Authority and reguard to Pope *Leo*'s Letter, in which there are indeed very many Allegations from Scripture, but not ſo much as one from any Father. Thus it is plain, both from the Practice of thoſe Councils, and the Diſputes of thoſe who writ in defence of their Deciſions, that it was not then believed that they had any Infallible Authority, ſince that is never ſo much as once claimed by any of that time, that I know of, a great deal being ſaid to the contrary by many of them. It is true, there are ſome high Expreſſions, both in ſome of the Councils, and in ſome of the Fathers of that time, which import that they believed *they were directed by God* : But this is no other, than what may be ſaid concerning any Body of Good and Learned men, who uſe a great deal of pious caution in forming their Deciſions. Therefore great difference is to be made between a plain aſſuming an Infallible Anthority, and Rhetorical Hints of their being guided by the Holy Ghoſt; the former does not appear, and the latter ſhews that ſuch as uſed thoſe ways of ſpeaking, did not think them infallible; but they believing that they had made good Deciſions, did upon that preſume that they were guided by the Holy Ghoſt.

Aug. con. Maxim. l. 3. c. 19.

And thus it appears in a great variety of Conſiderations, that we have no reaſon to believe that there is an Infallibility in a General Council, and that we do not ſo much as know what is neceſſary to make one. And to ſum up all that belongs to this Head, The Deciſions of thoſe Councils muſt have an Infallible Expounder as well, as it is urged, that the Books of the Scriptures cannot be of uſe to us, if there is not in the Church a *living ſpeaking Judge* to declare their true ſenſe. Now this is rather more neceſſary with relation to the Decrees of Councils, which as they are Writings, as well as the Scriptures, ſo they being much more Voluminous, and more artificially contrived, and couched, need a Commentary much more than a few plain and ſimple Writings, which make up the *New Teſtament*. If then the Councils muſt be expounded, there muſt be, according to their main reaſoning, an Infallibility lodged ſomewere elſe, to give their ſenſe : And the neceſſity of this has appeared evidently ſince the time of the Council of *Trent*; for both upon the Article of *Divine Grace*, and upon their Sacrament of *Penance*, there have been, and ſtill are, great debates among them concerning the meaning of the Decrees of that Council, both Parties pretending that they are of their ſide. Who then ſhall decide theſe Controverſies, and expound thoſe Decrees? This muſt not be laid over to the next General Council, for then the Infallibility will be in an Abeyance, and loſt during that Interval.

So this Inference leads me to the laſt Hypotheſis, That the Infallibility is in the Pope, and in him only. And it muſt be confeſſed, that this is the only Opinion that is conſiſtent to it ſelf in all its parts : Here is a *living and ſpeaking Judge*, and if he is not Infallible, it is plain that they have no

Infallibility

Infallibility at all among them. And yet his Infallibility, as it is a thing of which no man ever dreamt for the first nine or ten Ages, so it has such violent presumptions against it, that without very express proof it will not be reasonable to expect that any should believe it. The Ignorance of most Popes, the Secular Maxims by which they are governed, the Political Methods in which they are elected, the Forgeries, chiefly of their Decretal Epistles, by which their Authority was principally asserted, and which are now as universally rejected as spurious, as they were once owned to be genuine; their aspiring to the same Authority in Temporals, for many Ages, which they have gained in Spirituals; their having dissolved the whole Authority of the Primitive Constitutions, and Ancient Canons of the Church, and all that practice of Corruption that is in all their Courts, by which the whole order of the Church is totally reversed: All these are such lawful and violent Prejudices against them, that they must needs fortify a man in opposition to any such Pretensions, till it is very plainly proved.

These Characters agree so very ill with Infallibility, that it is not easy to believe they can be together: Since for above 800 years together the Papacy, as it is represented by their own Writers, was, perhaps, the worst Succession of men that can be found in any History; And it will seem strange, if God has lodged such wonderful Power with such a sort of men, and yet has taken so little care of them, to make them look like the proper Subjects of that Authority. We do plainly see, that the Primitive Church, even when they enlarged their Papal Authority, as to Government, did it, what out of a respect to St. *Peter*, and St. *Paul*, who they believed founded that Church, and suffered Martyrdom in it; and what, or most chiefly, out of their regard to the dignity of that *City*, it being the Head of the Empire, under which they lived; and this appeared by their giving the same Priviledges to *Constantinople*, when it became the *Imperial City*, which was made second to the other, and equal to it, except only in order and rank: But as for the Doctrine of the Church, tho still the regard to St. *Peter* went far; yet when *Liberius* subscribed to *Semiarianism*, it was never pretended that his Authority had in any thing altered the case, which must have been urged, if he had been believed Infallible.

The Case of *Honorius* does fully discover the sense of the Church in the Sixth Century, concerning their Infallibility: He was condemned as a *Monothelite*, by a General Council, which was confirmed by several Popes, who did by name condemn him. Now we are not, a whit concerned in his Cause and Condemnation, whether it was just or not; and whether it was upon a due examination or not; It is enough for us that a General Council, as well as several Popes in that Age, had never dreamt of Infallibility; otherwise they could not have condemned him, or believe him capable of Heresy. This might be brought down to many later Instances, in which several Popes have been charged with Heresy; one shall suffice.

They have pretended to an Authority from Christ, to depose Kings, and to transfer their Dominions to others: This they have not only done by force and violence, but by many solemn Decisions, in which this Authority has been claimed as founded on several Passages of Scripture, not forgetting those, *In the beginning*, not, *In the beginnings*, *did God create*, and *the great light that rules the day*; these, with many more, they have urged both from

the *Old* and *New Teſtament*. This they did with the utmoſt pomp of ſolemn Declarations, and upon this Head they filled the World with Wars: Some few writ againſt theſe Pretenſions, but the Popes ſtood to them, and carried them on in a courſe of five or ſix Centuries with all poſſible vigour: And during thoſe Ages this Doctrine grew to be univerſally received by the Learned and Unlearned, by all the Univerſities, all the Divines, Canoniſts, and Caſuiſts, not one ſingle Perſon daring to oppoſe ſo ſtrong a Current: So that Cardinal *Perron* was in the right, when he affirmed that this was the Doctrine univerſally received in the Church for the laſt ſix Centuries, without contradiction, before *Calvin*'s days; and thoſe few that ſeemed to write againſt it, durſt only oppoſe the Pope's direct Power in *Temporals* as the *Superior Lord*, to whom Kings were but *Vaſſals*, but durſt not contradict his Authority over them in caſe of *Hereſy*.

This then being ſo publick and unconteſted a Point, as it ſhakes the Authority of *Oral Tradition*, and ſhews how Doctrines, even in points in which mens Intereſts did ſtrongly oppoſe them, could get into the Church, though not derived down from the Apoſtles; ſo it totally deſtroys the Pope's Pretenſions to Infallibility, in the Opinion of all ſuch as think this to be ſimply unlawful; and that it ſubverts the *Order* which God has ſetled in the World. For there is not any one Fact in Hiſtory that can be leſs conteſted, than that the Popes have aſſumed this Authority, and that they have vouched Divine Warrants for it.

To this alſo we may well add another train of Difficulties, about the Right to chuſe this Pope; in whom it is veſted; what number is neceſſary for a Canonical Election; and how far *Simony* voids it; and who is the Competent Judge of the *Simony*; or in the caſe of different Elections, who ſhall judge which of the two pretending Popes was truly choſen. It muſt alſo be cleared in what form he is to proceed, when Infallibility accompanies his Deciſions; whether he may proceed upon his own ſenſe, or with the advice of others, and who theſe muſt be; and what Solemnities in the Publication are neceſſary to make him ſpeak *ex Cathedra*. Here a great variety of Difficulties ariſe, which ought to be well cleared to us, before we can be bound to acquieſce in ſo great a Point as his Infallibility: And we ought to have theſe things made out by a Divine Authority; for if Chriſt has made a ſpecial grant of Infallibility to the Biſhops of *Rome*, no Forms nor Rules invented by men can limit that. Theſe may be Rules agreed on as fit to be obſerved; but after all, if a Pope is Infallible, by a Commiſſion from Jeſus Chriſt, he muſt be believed Infallible, tho he ſhould break through all thoſe Forms, that men have only invented.

It remains then, that we conſider thoſe Proofs that are brought to confirm this; ſince without very good ones, it is extream unreaſonable to urge ſuch a Point, or to expect that it ſhould be ſubmitted to. Here all that was ſaid formerly againſt proving this matter from Scripture, is to be remembred: But waving that in this place, the Paſſages that ſeem to be formal, for the Church in general, are brought to ſupport the Papal Authority: For if great Powers are given to the Church, and if it does not appear that they are any where elſe, then they muſt be found in him, he being the Church-Repreſentative. But this is an abſurd Imagination, unleſs they can ſhew us, that God has lodged that Repreſentation in that See. As for that of 18. St. *Matthew* 17. *for telling the Church*, and that ſuch as *do not hear it, ſhall be to us as Heathens and Publicans*, it muſt be confeſs'd, that theſe words barely in themſelves, and as ſeparated from all that went before, ſeem to ſpeak out all that they plead for; but when the occaſion

occaſion of them, and the manner that governs them, is conſider'd, nothing is plainer, that our Saviour is here ſpeaking only of ſuch quarrellings and differences as may happen to fall out among Chriſtians, who are by theſe words oblig'd to try all amicable ways of ſetling them: Firſt by private endeavours, then by the interpoſition of Friends, and finally, by the Authority of that Body or Church to which they belong'd; and ſuch as could not be prevail'd on by thoſe methods, were to be eſteem'd no true Chriſtians, but to be look'd on as *Heathens*, or as very bad men. They might upon that be excommunicated, and proſecuted afterwards in Civil Courts: ſince they had no right any more to the Tenderneſs and Charity that ought to be among the Members of the Church. This Expoſition has a fair appearance, and looks like being true, to ſay no more at preſent, for that is enough, according to what was formerly laid down, ſince the proofs of ſuch a matter as this is, ought to be full and home: This ſeems to look more favourable towards the way of the Congregational Churches, in which the whole Aſſembly of the Brotherhood govern all their Concerns; but does not ſo much as by a hint ſeem to favour the pretenſions, either of Popes or Councils.

That Character of the Church given by St. *Paul*, that it is *the Pillar and Ground of Truth*, is a figurative form of Speech, upon which it is never ſafe to build, much leſs to lay ſo much weight upon it: It is a Deſcription that the *Jews* gave to their Synagogues, and is by St. *Paul* appli'd to the Church of *Epheſus*; for it is viſible, that it has no relation to the Catholick Church, it being only an enforcing conſideration to oblige *Timothy* to a greater caution in his Behaviour there. It has viſibly a relation to Inſcriptions that were made on *Pillars*: but what ever be the ſtrict Importance of the Phraſe, it is clear, that it is but a Phraſe, and therefore it cannot bear that which is raiſed upon it. 1 Tim. 3. 15.

Some Reflections have been already made on thoſe Promiſes of Chriſt to his Apoſtles, that *the Spirit ſhould lead them into all Truth*, which plainly related to the infallible Conduct under which they were to be put; but from theſe words themſelves there is no reaſon to infer, that the Promiſes were to deſcend to any after them, they relate to an immediate Inſpiration; ſo if they prove any thing, they prove too much, That the Church muſt ſtill have in it a ſucceſſive Inſpiration. It is urg'd, that a parity of Reaſon leads us to conclude, That this Promiſe was ſtill to continue, tho not in the ſame manner, in the Church: But all ſuch Arguments are only conjectural Inferences, and are at beſt but probabilities; ſo that there is no arguing from them, and therefore this can ſignify nothing.

Thoſe words of our Saviour's, with which St. *Matthew* concludes his Goſpel, *Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world*, infer no Infallibility, but import only a promiſe of Aſſiſtance and Protection, which was a neceſſary encouragement to the Apoſtles, who were ſent out upon ſo hard and laborious, as well as dangerous Commiſſion. In both Teſtaments, by God's *being with* any, by *his walking with them, his being in the midſt of them, his never leaving them, nor forſaking them*, no more is meant, but that he watches over them; that he directs, aſſiſts and protects them; and there being a vaſt difference between all this and Infallibility, it can prove noting of that kind. 28. Mat. 20. 2 Cor. 6. 16 13 Heb. 5.

So that in concluſion, the whole matter muſt turn upon the words of Chriſt

to St. *Peter*; for these do not relate to the Church in general, but seem to belong particularly to him: yet there is not so much as a hint given to lead us to apply them to his Successors; nor does he give any himself when he was writing his Second Epistle, not long before his death, since he mentions a Revelation that he had of its being near him; yet he does not in those last Warnings against the Corrupters of this Holy Religion, give so much as a remote Intimation of any Authority that he was to leave behind him for the Government of the Church, and preserving it pure both from Error and Immorality. Nor were these words of Christ's so much as pretended for many Ages, to import any Authority or Infallibility lodg'd with St. *Peter*'s Successors. I do not now question his being at *Rome*, tho that matter is really so doubtful, that even there, we are far from any degree so much as of human Certainty. But to go on with those words of our Saviour's to St. *Peter*, there is one great presumption that lies against any peculiar Authority given to him by them, since we see not the least appearance; either in the *Acts of the Apostles*, or Epistles, of any peculiar Appeals or References made to him: On the contrary, he seems to be call'd to an account for his going to *Cornelius*, and baptizing the *Gentiles*; he only delivers his Opinion as one person in the Council of *Jerusalem*, but St. *James* gives the definitive Sentence. St. *Paul* never makes any Appeal to him, in the Contests of which he writes; He settles matters, and makes Decisions, without ever having recourse to his Authority. He seems on the contrary to avoid it, and when probably some of the Judaisers among the *Galatians* were appealing to him, or at least to some practices of his, St. *Paul* shews how he had fail'd in those matters: for tho the Apostles were so govern'd by Divine Inspiration, that they could not err nor be mistaken in points of Doctrine; yet as to their Actions, they were left to the freedom of their own Wills, and so humane frailty might in some Instances have prevail'd over them. It is evident from that Epistle, that St *Paul* own'd no dependance upon him, nor did he submit in any sort to him, as having any degrees in his Commission or Authority superiour to his own. These are all such pregnant Intimations, as make it more reasonable to give such a sence to those words, as will import no special Authority given to St. *Peter*, since it does not appear, that either St. *Peter* or the Apostles themselves understood them so: for since they persist afterwards to have their Disputes, *which of them was the greatest*, it is plain, they did not understand this to be the Importance of our Saviour's Words; And it is as plain, that no part of the Scripture-History makes for this, but very much against it.

Now as to the words themselves, they begin with an Allusion to his Name, and Phrases built upon such Allusions, are seldom to be strictly and Grammatically understood. By, *Upon this Rock will I build my Church*, many of the Fathers have understood the *Person of Christ*; others, which amounts to the same thing, *faith in him*, or the *Confession of that faith*; for strictly speaking, *the Church*, can only be said to be founded upon Christ and his Doctrine. In a secondary Sense, it may indeed be said to be founded on the *Apostles*, and upon St. *Peter* as the *first* in Order, as well as the forwardest among them: and since the Apostles are all reckon'd *Foundations*, tho this should be allow'd to be the meaning of these words, which yet is a sense in which they were not taken for many Ages, it will import nothing peculiar to St.

16. Mat. 18, 19.

2. Eph. 20.

Peter.

Peter. What follows, *of the gates of hell's not being able to prevail againſt it*, may either be underſtood according to the *Greek* Phraſe, *Death*, which is often thus repreſented as the entrance to the *Grave*, which is the ſignification of the word rendered *Hell*; and then the meaning is, *That the Church which Chriſt was to found, was never to come to a period*, and to *die*, as the *Jewiſh* Religion was then to do: Or by a Phraſe common among the *Jews*, who underſtand by *Gates*, the Wiſdom and Strength of a Place, ſince their Court and Councils were held near their *Gates*, theſe words may ſignify, That all the powers of Darkneſs, with all their force and ſpite, ſhould not be able to bear down or deſtroy this Church; but this does not bar any Errors or Corruptions from creeping into any part of it: for the word rendred *prevail*, properly ſignifies an entire Victory, by which it ſhould be conquered and extirpated.

As for the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven*, that Chriſt promiſed *to give to him*, it muſt again be conſider'd, that theſe words are figurative; ſo that it is never ſafe to argue from them, ſince Figures are capable of larger and narrower Significations. No man will carry them ſo far, as to think that the power of giving or denying Eternal Life, is hereby put in St. *Peter*; for that is ſingly in the Mediator's hands. This ſhews how difficult it is to know how much is to be drawn from a Figure.

By *Kingdom of Heaven*, through the whole Goſpels, with very few or no exceptions, we find that the Diſpenſation of the *Meſſias* is to be underſtood; this appears evident from the firſt words with which both St. *John Baptiſt*, and our Saviour begun their preaching, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*: and this is the ſenſe in which it is taken in all thoſe Parables to which our Saviour compares *the Kingdom of Heaven*; and in thoſe words, *the Kingdom of Heaven is among you*, and *it cometh not with obſervation*, or the like. This being laid down, as that which will ſoon appear to every one that ſhall attentively read the Four Goſpels; then by the *Keys* of the Diſpenſation of the *Meſſias*, the moſt natural and leaſt forc'd ſignification, and that which agrees beſt with thoſe words of the ſame figure, *he that hath the Key of the houſe of* David; he *that openeth and no man ſhutteth*; *and that ſhutteth and no man openeth*: and alſo with the Phraſe of the *Key of knowledge*, by which the Lawyers were deſcribed; for they had a *Key* with *writing Tables* given them as the Badge of their Profeſſion, which naturally imported that they were to open the door for others entring into the knowledge of the Law: With which our Saviour reproach'd them, that they *entred not in themſelves*, *and hinder'd thoſe that were entring*. From all theſe hints, I ſay, we may gather, that according to the Scripture-phraſe, by the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, is meant, that St. *Peter* was firſt to open the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel; which he did in the firſt preaching of it to the *Jews*, after the wonderful *Pentecoſt*: and this was yet more eminently perform'd by him, when he firſt open'd the *door to the Gentiles*: to which the words of the *Kingdom of Heaven* ſeem to have a more particular reſpect. This Diſpenſation was committed to him, and executed by him, and ſeems to be claim'd by him, as his peculiar Priviledge in the Council at *Jeruſalem*; ſo we may ſafely conclude, that this is the natural meaning of theſe words, and is all that was to be imported by them; and thoſe who carry them further, muſt uſe ſeveral diſtinctions, leſt they give St. *Peter* that which belongs only to our Saviour himſelf.

3. Rev. 7. 11. Luke. 52.

What follows concerning the *binding and looſing in Heaven, whatſoever he ſhould bind*

bind or loose on earth, is no special Priviledge of St. *Peter's*, since we find the same words said by our Saviour to all his Apostles; so that this was given in common to all the Apostles. According to the sense now given of *the Kingdom of Heaven*, these words will be easily understood, which are otherwise very dark: but they are full of Figures, and so are not to be too far stretch'd. By *binding and loosing*, we find the *Rabbins* do commonly understand the *affirming* or *denying* the Obligation of any Precept that was in dispute. This then being a common form of speech among the *Jews*, a genuine Paraphrase of these words is, That Christ committed to the Apostles the dispensation of his Doctrine to the World; in which they should be authoris'd to dissolve the Obligation of the Mosaical Laws, and to confirm such parts of them as were Moral, and perpetually binding; which the Apostles should do, with such visible Characters of a Divine Authority, empowering and conducting them in it, that it should be very evident, that what they did on *Earth* was ratified in *Heaven*. These words thus understood, carry in them a plain sense, which agrees well with the whole design of the Gospel; but whatsoever may be their sense, it is plain, that there was nothing here peculiarly given to St. *Peter*.

18 Mat. 18.

As for our Saviour's praying for St. *Peter*, *that his faith might not fail*, and his restoring him to his Apostolate by a threefold charge, *feed my sheep* or *lambs*; it has such a visible relation to his fall, and threefold denial, that it is not worth the while to enlarge on; or to shew, that it is capable of no other signification, and cannot be carried further.

22. Luke 32.

21 Joh. 15.

And thus I have gone through all that is brought from the Scriptures, for asserting the Infallibility of the Church, and in particular of the Pope's; and have I hope fully shew'd, that they cannot bear that sense, but that they must genuinely bear a plainly different sense, which does no way differ from our Doctrine. It was necessary to clear all this; for tho, as was before made out, it is no proper way for them to resolve their Faith by passages out of Scripture; yet these are very good objections to us, who upon other Reasons do submit to their Authority.

There remains but one thing now to be clear'd, which is this; If the Church is not Infallible, it does not easily appear what certainty we can have concerning the Scriptures, since we believe them upon the Testimony of the Church; and we have no other knowledge concerning them, but what has been handed down to us by Tradition: If therefore this is fallible, we may be deceiv'd in our persuasion even concerning them. But here a great difference is to be made, between the carrying down a Book to us, and the Oral Delivering of a Doctrine; it being almost as hard to suppose how the one could fail, as how the other should not fail. The Books being in many hands, spread over the whole Churches, and read in all their Assemblies, makes this to be a very different thing, from discourses that are in the Air, and to which every man that reports them, is apt to give his own Cue.

A great difference is also to be made between the Testimony of a Witness, and the Authority of a Judge. If in any Age of the Church, Councils had examin'd controverted Writings, and had upon that past Sentence, this had been indeed a judging the matter, but no such thing ever was. The Codex of the Scriptures was setled some Ages before any Provincial Council gave out a Catalogue of the Books which they held as Canonical: For no ancient General

neral Council ever did it; and tho the Canonical Epistles, of which there not being such a certain Standard, they not being addrest to any particular Body that had preserv'd the Originals, were not so early nor so universally receiv'd as the others were, yet the matter was setled without any Authoritative Judgment, only by examining Originals, and such other Methods by which all things of that nature can only be made out. But this matter having been so fully consider'd and stated in another Discourse, I shall dwell no longer on it in this.

As for the Authorities which are brought from some of the Ancients, in favour of the Authority of the Church, and of Tradition; it is to be considered, that though the word *Tradition*, as it is now used in Books of Controversy, imports a sense opposite to that which is written in the Scripture, yet *Tradition* is of its own signification, a general word, that imports every thing which is *delivered*: And in this sense the whole Christian Religion, as well as the Books in which it is contained, was naturally called the *Tradition of the Apostles*: So that a great many things said by Ancients to magnify the Tradition of the Apostles, and by way of Appeal to it, have no relation to this matter. Besides, when men were so near the Apostolical Age, that they could name the Persons from whom they had such or such hints, who had received them from the Apostles, or from Apostolical men, *Tradition* was of another sort of Authority, and might have been much more safely appealed to, than at the distance of so many Ages: Therefore if any thing is brought either from *Irenæus* or *Tertullian*, that sounds this way, here is a plain difference to be observed between their Age and ours, which does totally diversify it.

But to convince the World how early Tradition might either vary or misrepresent matters, let the Tradition not only in, but before St. *Irenæus*'s time, concerning the observation of *Easter*, be considered, which goes up as high as St. *Polycarp*'s time. We find, that as the several Churches adhered to the practices of those Apostles that founded them, so they had quite forgot the grounds on which it seems these various Observations were founded: Since though it is very probable, that those who kept *Easter* on the *Jewish* day, did it, that by their condescendence to the *Jews* in that matter, they might gain upon them, and soften their Prejudices against Christianity; yet it does not appear that their Successors thought of that at all, for they vouched their Custome, and resolved to adhere to it; nor is there any thing mentioned on either side, that give us the account of those early, but different Observations. If then Tradition failed so near its Fountain, we may easily judge what account we ought to make of it at so great a distance.

Many things are brought with great pomp out of St. *Austin*'s Writings, magnifying the Authority of the Church, in terms, which after all the allowances that are to be made for his diffuse and *African* Eloquence, can hardly be justified: Yet when it is considered, that he writ against the *Donatists*, who had broke the *Unity of the Church* upon the pretence of a matter of *fact*, concerning the Ordainers of *Cecilian*, which had been, as to the point of *fact*, often judged against them: And yet as they had distracted the whole *African* Churches, so they were men of fierce and inplacable Tempers, that broke out daily into acts of great fury and violence, and had set up a principle that must for ever break the Peace and Union of the Church; which was, that the vertue of all the publick Acts of Worship, of Sacraments and Ordinances

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depended upon the perſonal worth of him that officiated; ſo that his Errors or Vices did make void all that paſt through his hands. Now when ſo warm a man as St. *Auſtin* had ſo bad a Principle, and ſo ill a diſpoſition of mind in view, it is no wonder if he brought out all that he could think on upon the ſubject; ſo no wonder if he raiſes the Authority and the Priviledges of the Church to a vaſt height: Yet after all, theſe were not his ſetled thoughts; for he goes off from them, whenſoever he has an eye on his Diſputes againſt the *Pelagians*; for the Syſtem which he had framed in thoſe Points, could not bear with any other Notion of the *Church*, but that of the perſons *predeſtinated*, to whom all the Promiſes belonged. And thus whatever he himſelf aſſerts in his zeal againſt the *Donatiſts*, comes to be thrown down, when the *Pelagians* are in his view; ſo we ſee from hence how much deference is due to his Authority in this Point.

The laſt head relating to this whole matter, is to explain in what the Authority of the Church does conſiſt; what it is both in matters of Faith and Diſcipline. As to matters of Faith, it is certain, that every Body of men is bound to ſtudy to maintain its own Order and Quiet, and muſt be authoris'd to preſerve it; otherwiſe it cannot long continue to be *one Body*. This binds the Body of Chriſtians yet much more, who are ſtrictly charged to *love one another, to worſhip God with one heart and mouth, to be of the ſame mind and judgment, to aſſemble themſelves together, and to withdraw from all ſuch as cauſe diviſions*, or corrupt the great *Truſt* of the *Faith* committed to their *keeping*. It muſt be therefore a great part of the duty of thoſe that are bound to *feed the flock*, to obſerve when any begin to broach new Opinions, that they may confirm the weak, and ſtop the mouths of gainſayers: which as the Apoſtles themſelves did during their own lives; ſo by the charges that they gave to the Churches in their Epiſtles, and more fully by thoſe given to *Timothy* and *Titus*, it appears that a main part of their Care and Authority was to be employ'd that way. When therefore any new Doctrines are ſtarted, or when there ariſe Diſputes about any part of Religion, the Paſtors of the Church ought to conſider, whether or not it is in a matter of any great conſequence, in which the Faith or Lives of men may be concerned? If the point is not of a great importance, it is a piece of wiſdom to connive at leſſer matters, and to leave men to a juſt freedom in things where that freedom is not like to do hurt; only even there, care is to be taken to keep men in temper, that they become not too keen in the management of their Opinions; and that they neither diſturb the Peace of the Church, nor State, upon that account.

If the matters appear to be great, either in themſelves, or in the conſequences that are like to follow upon them, then the Paſtors of the Church ought to conſider them with an equal and impartial mind; they ought to hear Parties fully, and weigh their Arguments carefully; they ought to examine the ſenſe of the Scriptures, and of the beſt times of the Church, upon thoſe Heads, and finally to give Sentence: In which two things are to be conſidered; the one is, That great regard is due to a Deciſion made by a Body of men, who ſeem to have acted without prejudice or intereſt. For I confeſs it will be very hard to maintain ſuch a reſpect for a Company, in which matters are carried with ſo much Artifice and Intrigue, as even Cardinal *Palavicini* repreſents in the management of the Council of *Trent*, where Biſhops were careſſed or threatned, well paid, or ill uſed, as they gave their Voices: Such a proceeding as this will

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rather inflame, than allay the oppoſition; but a fair and equitable, a juſt and calm way of examining matters of diſpute, will naturally beget a reſpect, even in ſuch as cannot yield a ſubmiſſion to their Decrees.

After all, it muſt be confeſſed, That no Man can be bound to a blind Submiſſion, unleſs we ſuppoſe an Infallibility to be in the Church; yet Private Men owe to Publick Deciſions, when decently made, a due reſpect; they ought to diſtruſt their own judgments, and examine the matter more accurately: But if they are ſtill convinc'd that the Deciſion is wrong, they are bound to perſiſt in their own thoughts, only they ought to oppoſe modeſtly; to conſider well the Importance of Order and Peace, and whether their Opinion, even ſuppoſe it true, is worth the Noiſe that may be made about it, or the Diſorders that may follow upon it. After all, If they are ſtill convinced that their Opinions are true, and that they relate to the indiſpenſible Duties of Religion, or the neceſſary Articles of Chriſtianity, they muſt go on, as they will anſwer it to God, upon the ſincerity of their Hearts, and the fulneſs of their Convictions: So that the Definitions of the Church may have very good Effects, even when it is not pretended that they are Infallible.

Another thing to be conſider'd in thoſe Deciſions is, That though they are not Infallible, yet they may have Authority, in this reſpect, That they are the eſtabliſhed Doctrine of ſuch a Body of Chriſtians, who will have no other to be taught among them, and will admit none to be of their Body, or at leaſt to be a Teacher among them, who is not of the ſame mind. In this, it is certain, great Tenderneſs and Prudence is to be uſed, and the natural liberty of Mankind is not to be too much limited: But yet as any Man may fix and declare his own Opinion; ſo certainly by a much greater parity of reaſon, any Society or Body of Men may declare their Opinions, and ſo far fix them, as to exclude all other Doctrines, and the Favourers of them, from being of their *Body*, or from bearing any *Office* in it: So that though ſuch Deciſions do not enter into Mens Conſciences, nor bind them further than as they are convinced by the Reaſons and Authorities upon which they are founded; yet they may have a vaſt influence on the Order and Peace of Churches and States.

As to Rituals, it is certain that there are many little Circumſtances and Decencies that belong to the Worſhip of God, the Order of Religious Aſſemblies, and their Adminiſtrations; and that in theſe, the Paſtors of a Church, by the Natural Right that all Societies have to keep themſelves in order, muſt have a Power to determine all things of this nature. This becomes yet clearer in the Chriſtian Societies, from the Rules that the Apoſtles gave to the Churches, *To do all things in Order*, and for the ends of *Edification* and *Peace*. There is not one of the Rules laid down in Scripture, concerning the Sacraments, or the Officers of the Church, to which many Circumſtances do not belong; now either theſe muſt be all left to every Man's liberty, which muſt needs create a jarring diſagreement, in the ſeveral parts of this Body, that would both breed confuſion, and look very ridiculous and abſurd; or there muſt be an Authority in the Paſtors of the Church to meet together, and to ſettle theſe by mutual conſent. All the greater Bodies of thoſe who divide from our Conſtitutions, have ſome Rituals of their own; ſo the Diſpute in this, muſt only be concerning the degrees and extent of this Power: For if any Authority is allowed, it will not

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be eaſy to fix any other Bounds to it, but this, that it muſt not invade the Divine Authority, nor do any thing beyond the Rules and Limits ſet in the Scriptures; for if there is the leaſt degree of Authority in the Church, the grounds upon which it is founded, muſt carry it to every thing that cannot be proved to be unlawful. Bare unfitneſs, though it ought to be a Conſideration of great weight when ſuch things are deliberated about; yet when they are once concluded, can be no reaſon for diſobeying them, ſince the fitneſs of Order, and the decency of Unity and Obedience, is certainly of much more value, than any ſpecial unfitneſs that can be ſuppoſed to be in any particular Inſtance. So that one of theſe two muſt be admitted, either that the Paſtors of the Church have no ſort of Authority, even in the ſmalleſt Circumſtances, but are limited by the Rules of the Scripture, and can only execute them ſtrictly, and not go beyond them in a tittle; or this Authority muſt go to every thing that is lawful. On that I will dwell no longer here, the fuller diſcuſſion of this matter belonging to another Diſcourſe,

It is a natural Conſequence of the Authority given to the Paſtors of the Church, That they having declared and fixed their Doctrine, and having ſetled Rules for their Rituals, may excommunicate ſuch as either do not live according to the Rules of their Religion, which are a main part of their Doctrine, or do not obey the Conſtitutions of their Society. Excommunication, in the Strictneſs of things, is only the Churches refuſing to receive a perſon into her Communion; now as every Private man is the Maſter of his own Actions, it is clear that every Body of Men muſt alſo be the Maſters of theirs: And thus, though Excommunication in ſome reſpects is declaratory, it being a ſolemn denunciation of the Judgments of God, according to the tenor of the Goſpel, againſt perſons who live in an open violation of ſome one or more of its Laws; ſo it is alſo an authoritative Act, by which a Church refuſes to communicate with ſuch a Perſon. In this, it is true, Churches ought to make the *terms of Communion* with them as large and extenſive as may conſiſt with the Rules of Religion, and of Order; but after all, they having a Power over themſelves, and their own Actions, muſt be ſuppoſed to be likewiſe cloathed with a Power to communicate with other Perſons, or not to do it, as they ſhall ſee cauſe; in which, great difference is to be made between this Power in it ſelf, and the uſe and management of it: for any Abuſes, whether true, or only pretended, though they may well be urged to procure a proper Reformation of them, yet cannot be alledged againſt the Power it ſelf, which is both juſt and neceſſary.

It is not ſo very clear to ſtate the Subordination in which the Church is to be put under the Civil Power, and how far all Acts of Church Power are ſubject to the Laws and Policies of thoſe States to which the ſeveral Churches do belong. It is certain, that the Magiſtrate's being a Chriſtian or not, does not at all alter the Caſe, that has only a relation to his own ſalvation; for his Authority is the ſame, whatever his Belief may be in matters of Religion. His deſign to protect or to deſtroy Religion, alters the Caſe more ſenſibly; for the regards to that Protection, and to the Peace and Order that follow upon it, together with the Breaches and Diſorders that might follow upon an ill underſtanding between Church and State, are matters of Such Conſequence, that it is not only meer Prudence, which may give perhaps too ſtrong a Bias

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to carnal Fears and Policies; but the Rules of Religion, which oblige the Church to ſtudy to preſerve that Order and Protection, which is one of the chief Bleſſings of the Society, and a main Inſtrument of doing much good. Great difference is to be made between an Authority that acts with a viſible deſign to deſtroy Religion, and another that intends to protect it, but that errs in its conduct, and does often reſtrain the Rules of Order, and impoſe hard and uneaſy things: Certainly in the latter much is to be born with, that may be otherwiſe uneaſy, becauſe the main is ſtil ſafe; and private ſlips, when endured and ſubmitted to, can never be compared to thoſe publick diſorders, that a rigid maintaining of that which is perhaps in it ſelf good, muſt occaſion. But when the deſign is plain, and that the Conduct of the Civil Powers goes againſt the Truth of Religion, either in whole, or in any main Article of it, then the Body of the Chriſtians of that State ought to fortify themſelves, by maintaining their Order, and their other Rules, in ſo far as they are neceſſary to their preſervation.

Upon the whole matter, it does not appear that the Church has any Authority to act in oppoſition to the State, but meerly in thoſe things in which the Religion that ſhe profeſſes is plain and poſitive; ſo that the Queſtion comes to be really this, *Whether is it better to obey God, than Man?* There the Rule is clear, and the Deciſion is ſoon made: So when the Church acts meerly in obedience to Rules and Laws laid down in Scripture, ſuch as, in declaring the Doctrine, in adminiſtring the Sacraments, and maintaining the ſetled Officers of the Church, ſhe is upon a ſure Bottom, and muſt caſt her ſelf upon the Providence of God, whatever may happen, and ſtill obey God; but in all things that have ariſen out of ancient Cuſtoms and Canons, in every thing where ſhe has not a Law of God to ſupport her, I do not ſee any Power ſhe has to act in oppoſition to Law, and to the Supreme Civil Authority.

In this the conſtant practice of the *Jews* is no ſmall Argument; whoſe *Sanhedrin*, that was a Civil Court, and the Head of their State, did give Rules and Orders, which their Prieſts were bound to obey, when not contrary to the Law of God. We are ſure this was the Rule in our Saviour's time; and it was never cenſured nor reproved by him, nor by the Apoſtles. The Argument is alſo ſtrong, that is drawn from the conſtant practice of the Church, from the time that ſhe firſt had the protection of the Civil Authority, till the times of the Papal Domination, in which we find, the Emperours all along making Laws concerning all the Adminiſtrations of the Church: we find them receiving Appeals in all Church matters, which they appointed ſuch Biſhops as hapned to be about their Courts, to examine: This was like our Court of Delegates; for the Biſhops, who judged thoſe matters, did not act according to Canon, or by the Eccleſiaſtical Authority, which had put the Church in a ſtated line of Subordination, according to the diviſion of the Provinces of the Empire: They acted only by an Imperial Authority; ſo that though they were Biſhops, they acted by the Emperor's Commiſſion. Such Authorities as theſe, drawn from the practices of the *Jewiſh* and the Primitive Church, are at leaſt ſtrong Inducements to believe this to be true. But the Argument that ſeems to determine it, is, That Men cannot be obliged to obey two different Authorities, that may happen to contradict one another; this were a ſtrange diſtraction in Mens Thoughts and

Conſciences, and therefore it cannot be ſuppoſed that God has put them under ſuch a divided Authority; for all Temporals will eaſily be fetched within an *in ordine ad ſpiritualia*. Since then every Soul is bound under the hazard of damnation to obey the Supreme Powers, we muſt be bound to obey their Laws in every thing that is not contrary to the Law of God; which ſeems to be the only Limitation that this can admit of. That ſettles this whole matter, which otherwiſe muſt be ravelled out into vaſt Intricacies; and yet it muſt be ſuppoſed for certain, that the Rule for Mens obedience muſt be diſtinct and fixed.

To conclude this whole matter; The beſt and ſureſt way for preſerving the Order and Authority of the Church, as well as its Peace and Proſperity, is for the Clergy to live and labour ſo, to be ſo humble and modeſt, ſo ſelf-denied and heavenly-minded, that from thence the *Laity* may be brought to ſee, that whatſoever Power they have, will be employed for the Publick good of the whole. This will make them to be leſs jealous, and more ſubmiſſive; and this will ſecure to them, moſt commonly, the protection and encouragement which they may expect from the *Civil Powers*; who will be apt to have regard to their Clergy, according to the eſteem which they obſerve their other Subjects have for them.

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DISCOURSE IV.

Concerning the

OBLIGATIONS

To continue in the

COMMUNION of the CHURCH.

THERE is nothing that concerns the Peace and Order of Churches, and indeed the quiet and good Government of Mankind more, than rightly to understand our Obligations to continue in the Communion of that Church in which we were born, or which is the main Body of that Society of Christians among whom we live. The extreams in this matter are dangerous on both hands. A lazy Compliance with every thing that is uppermost, because of the Law and Advantages that may be on its side, and an implicite believing and receiving of every thing that happens to be proposed to us, does on the one hand depress our Faculties, render us so easy to every Form in Religion, that we become at last indifferent to all, and concerned in none; it makes way for tyranny in those that govern, and sinks those that are governed into a sottish stupidity. On the other hand, a wanton cavilling at every thing, thebreaking of an Established Order, the making Divisions, and the drawing of Parties, the quarrelling about nicer points of speculation, or some lesser matters in Rituals, do occasion much passion and animosity, they take men much off from the great ends of Religion, they divide Christians from one another, and sharpen them against one another; all which are Evils of so high a nature in themselves, and in their Consequences, that it will be of great advantage to find so true a mean in this matter, that in it we may avoid the mischiefs of both extreams.

The foundation then to be laid here, is first, to consider the natural obligation that all men, who are united by any common Bond, come under to maintain a cordial affection, and a mutual good understanding among themselves; both as it is an instrument to preserve and strengthen their Body, and as it makes such a Body of men easy and happy. But this, that is a consi-

deration common to all joint Bodies of men, becomes much ſtronger in the Chriſtian Religion; one of its main deſigns being to knit mens hearts to one another, by a tenderneſs of *brotherly kindneſs and charity*, our Saviour having made this the diſtinction, *by which all the world might know who were his diſciples*, and who were not ſo. And all his Apoſtles, have in every one of their Epiſtles, not excepting the ſhorteſt, preſt this in ſuch a variety of copious and moſt earneſt Directions, that whoſoever reads the *New Teſtament* carefully, muſt ſee that this is enlarged on beyond all the other Duties of our Religion, and preſt in the moſt compreſenſive words, and with the moſt enforcing conſiderations poſſible, the chief of all being the love which our Saviour himſelf bare to us; in imitation of which, he has required us *to love one another, to love enemies, to paſs by, and to forgive injuries, doing good for evil*; to relieve the neceſſitous, and have bowels of compaſſion for all men.

13 Joh. 35.

This is a main part of the glory, as well as of the duties of our Religon. To advance this, and to endear us to one another, we are obliged to pray with, and for one another; we are bound to aſſemble our ſelves together, that by our ſeeing of one another, and meeting in the ſame Acts and Duties of Religion, our love and union may become ſtronger, and more firmly cemented. Sacraments are ſacred Rites, inſtituted not only to maintain our Devotion towards God, as Acts of Homage and Solemn Vows made to him, but likewiſe as Bonds to knit us together, as well as to unite us to our Head: And it is no ſmall confirmation of all this, that our Saviour in his laſt and longeſt Prayer to the Father, when he was interceding for his Church, has repeated this Prayer ſo often, no leſs than five times, in no very long Prayer, that *they might be one, and be kept and made perfect in one*; and the Unity prayed for is ſo ſublime, that it is compared to that unconceivable Unity or Union that was between the Father and the Son; and by this the world was to be convinced of the truth of his Religion, "*That the world might believe that the Father had ſent him.*

17. St. Joh. verſes 11, 21, 22, 23.

Verſe 23.

More needs not be ſaid upon this Head to make it evident, that it is of the greateſt importance to the Chriſtian Religion, to maintain an entire union among its Members; and that the chief mean of doing this, is their uniting themſelves in the ſame Acts of Worſhip. Now the only Queſtion that will remain, will be, How far muſt this go? and the only Anſwer that can be made to it, is, That it muſt go, till the Body, in which we happen to be engaged, impoſes unlawful terms of Communion on its Members: In that caſe we muſt remember, that *it is better to obey God than man*; and that we muſt *ſeek peace and truth*; ſince an Union on unlawful terms is a combination againſt God and his Truth, and is no piece of Chriſtian Charity. This will be agreed to on all hands in the general. So I will go next to examine the Pretences for disjointing this Union among our ſelves, and ſee whether the main Body among us, I mean our Church, has impoſed unlawful terms of Communion on her Members; for if that is true, we by ſo doing have broke this Union: or whether any who have ſeparated from us, have not done it upon leſs binding Conſiderations, for then they have broken the Union.

This I will manage with all poſſible fairneſs, and without the leaſt reflection on Perſons and Parties. I will ſtate their grounds, and put their Arguments, with the utmoſt force that I can apprehend belongs to them; and

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when I have weighed them, I will leave the whole matter to an Impartial consideration. The first point, in which every man must fix his thoughts, is, that it is not free to him to chuse to which Body he will join himself, as it is free to him to chuse in which Parish he will settle himself; for since all Parishes make but one Communion and Church, the one cannot be compared to the other: And if all that was said before, is true, then certainly it is not lawful for any man to break the Union of the Body, unless he is persuaded that it cannot be maintained but upon unlawful terms. Therefore except a man is under this persuasion, he sins if he departs from the Union of the Body. But since *Conscience* is a word that may be used in the following part of this Discourse, its true notion ought to be well setled; which is, according to the natural signification of the *word*, in all Languages, *an inward persuasion, founded upon some reason, apprehended to be true, concerning the lawfulness or unlawfulness of a thing.* By this it will appear, that a bare aversion or dislike to a thing, without any reason on which that dislike is grounded, cannot be called *Conscience*; since things with which we are not acquainted, or that are uncouth to us, which we have often heard spoken against, are disliked by us, through a habit or prejudice conceived against them: but unless this is founded upon some reason, that appears to us true, drawn either from the nature of things, or from the Scriptures, it is not *Conscience.* I do not say, that every man under these Convictions must be able to maintain those his Reasons to others, to be just and good; for then a better Arguer, who can silence him, should be able to alter his *Conscience*: But though he cannot answer Objections, yet as long as his Persuasion appears to be well grounded to himself, such a man is still under the bonds of his *Conscience.* I am not now to examine how far an erring Conscience obliges, or at least excuses, it is enough to have stated in general the true Notion of *Conscience*, by which every man that does not intend to deceive himself, may certainly know, whether he is really under the persuasions of Conscience, or if he is only guided by Humour, Conceit, or the power of Education and Prejudice.

The main Foundation out of which most of the Objections against some of the Terms of our Communion are rais'd, is this, 'That the Church is 'only empower'd to execute those Rules and Orders that are set Christians in 'the Scriptures; That the pretending to add to these, is to accuse the Scrip-'ture as defective; That all Additions to those Rules set us in Scripture, are 'Superstitious Usages; That they impose a yoke upon us, and so deprive us 'of our Christian Liberty; That if some Rites may be added, others upon the 'like reasons may be also added to these, and so on without bounds, as in Fact 'it appears; That when the Church went once off from the first simplicity, 'in which the Apostles deliver'd the Christian Religion to the World, and 'that new Rites were invented to beautify the Worship, these Additions did 'at last swell up to that intolerable height in which they are now in the Church 'of *Rome.* In Religious Matters, it is not enough, according to St. *Paul's* 'Rule, that a thing is *lawful*, it must also be *expedient*: But for that pretended 'expediency which is alledged for some Rites, that they are expressive and signi-'ficant, it is rather an Argument against them; for a significant Ceremony 'is of the nature of a Sacrament, the common definition of which, that it 1 Cor. 10. 'is a *visible sign of an invisible Grace* agreeing to it; and certainly the appointing 23. 'Sacraments is above the power of the Church, and can belong only to *Jesus*

'*Christ*,

'*Christ*, who is its Head and Founder. But all this is in appearance the 'ſtronger, if Rites ſo enjoin'd have been abus'd to Idolatry, and are parts of an Idolatrous Worſhip: To retain theſe, is to conform our ſelves to it, tho 'the Scriptures command us to come out from among all ſuch, and not to be 'conformable to them. *Hezekias* broke the *Brazen Serpent*, tho a Memorial
2 Kings 'of a ſignal Miracle, in which it had been in ſome ſort an Inſtrument, yet
18. 4. 'when even that was abus'd to Idolatry, a good King broke it to pieces. 'This will hold ſtronger againſt things that are but of human Inſtitution, 'That they ought to be taken away, how innocent ſoever they may be in them-'ſelves, after they are groſly abus'd. To keep up the uſe of ſuch things, is to ſcandalize and offend the weaker Chriſtians, tho St. *Paul* lays great weight 'upon this, and charges all Chriſtians not *to lay a ſtumbling-block in one anothers*
14. Rom. '*way*; he calls the doing otherwiſe, *the deſtroying a weak* Brother; and in con-
13. 1 'cluſion, ſince St. *Paul* ſaid, *whatſoever is not of faith, is ſin*, theſe Rites there-
Verſ. 23. 'fore not being warranted from Scripture, cannot be *of Faith*, the Object of 'which is a Divine Revelation; they muſt therefore be ſinful.

And thus I have ſet down all the Branches of the Plea againſt Ceremonies, with as much advantage as I can imagine belongs to them. I go therefore in the next place to take it to pieces, and to examine the ſtrength of the whole, and of every part of this Reaſoning, that, as muſt be acknowledg'd, wants not fair and ſpecious colours.

The main ſtreſs lies upon this, Whether the Church in her Rituals is ſo limited to the Scriptures, that ſhe has no power to add any thing to what is preſcribed in them? Great difference is to be made between matters of Doctrine, Rules of Life, Fœderal Acts, together with the other Acts of Worſhip which are parts of the *New Covenant*, or conditions of it; and ſome Ritual Appointments, ſuch as the Circumſtances of thoſe Inſtituted Acts, the forms for the Solemn Acts of Worſhip, together with ſome other Inſtitutions which are helps to Devotion, and do fix or raiſe the attention. For the former ſort, it is confeſs'd, That Chriſt and his Apoſtles having deliver'd this Religion to the World, it muſt continue in the ſame ſtate in which they ſetled it, without additions or variations: but ſince all inſtituted Actions muſt be determined by the Circumſtances of perſons, places, times, words and poſtures, theſe muſt be all manag'd with ſuch Decency and Beauty, as may carry on the Order and Edification of the Church; and ſince ſome Actions ſeem to have a very natural tendency to give good Impreſſions, and to raiſe a ſeriouſneſs and awe for Divine Performances, theſe may be alſo appointed by thoſe who are to *feed*, *teach* and *guide* their people.

We ſee the *Jews*, tho their Religion ſeems to have in it a ſufficient ſhare of Rituals, did add a great many Ceremonies to thoſe which *Moſes* gave them. They had in their Paſcal-Supper a thick ſawce of Dates, Almonds and Figs, pounded together, and wrought up into the form of Clay, to remember them of the Clay of which their Fathers had made Bricks in the Land of *Ægypt*; and yet our Saviour obſerv'd this Paſchal-Supper with the ſame addition: for this was probably the ſawce into which *Judas* dipt the Sop. They had likewiſe a form of Initiating Proſelytes into their Religion by Baptiſm, not mention'd in the *Old Teſtament*; and after this Paſchal-Supper, the Table was ſpread a ſecond time, and nothing but Bread and Wine was ſet on it: yet tho theſe two laſt mention'd were Rites added by them to the Divine Inſtitution, our Saviour was

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so far from condemning them for those additions, that he took these, and hallow'd them to be the two Fœderal Rites of his own Religion: Nor does he so much blame the *Pharisees* for the observation of those Rites which Tradition had handed down to them, as because they set that value on them, as to make the Laws of God of no effect upon their account, when those voluntary assum'd Ceremonies were prefer'd by them to the Moral Law it self; so that the over-valuing of Rituals, and the imagining that by them Compensation can be made to God for the weghtier Matters of the Law, Faith, Justice, and the Love of God, is indeed severely reprimanded by our Saviour; but the bare observance of them is no where censur'd by him. On the contrary, The whole service of the Synagogues was only a human Institution, no print of any Divine Precept appearing for it in the whole *Old Testament*; yet our Saviour came to their Synagogues, and bore a share in the Acts of Worship that were perform'd there. A Feast was Instituted by the *Maccabees*, in commemoration of their having purg'd the Temple from Idolatry, which was observ'd by our Saviour; and the whole *New Testament* is full of allusions to some Forms and Rites which were then practised by the *Jews* in their Worship, tho no where instituted in the *Old Testament*.

There are also some Precepts given in the *New Testament* about Ritual Matters, which are now taken away only by disuse; that is, by the Authority of the Church that has discontinu'd the practice of them: such is the Decree that the Apostles with the rest at *Jerusalem* made against the eating of *meats strangled, or offered to Idols, or of blood*; which as they are join'd with *Fornication*, so the prohibition of them is reckon'd among *necessary things*; yet these are now no more consider'd, as forbidden, that prohibition being lookt on either as a compliance with the *Jews*, in those precepts which they believe were given to the Sons of *Noah*; or as a direction to keep the Christians at a due distance from all compliances with the *Gentiles* in their Idolatrous practises. And now that all regards to the *Jews* have ceased with God's rejecting them from being his people, at the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and all danger of coming too near the practices of the *Gentiles*, is likewise at an end, we living no more among Heathenish Idolaters; the nature of the things prohibited by that Decree, not being evil in themselves, when the ground of the Prohibition ceases; all men reckon that the Prohibition must be at an end. Here then the Authority and Practice of the Church seems to be strong, even in bar to an Apostolical Decree; and none of those Bodies that are offended at our Rituals, have revived this: So at least this Argument is of force against those who do it not; for certainly a greater degree of Authority is necessary to take away a practice that has the face of a plain Commandment in Scripture enjoining it, than for adding such Rites as are recommended by new Emergencies. To this may be added the Practice and Rules given by the Apostles concerning Deaconesses: *Phœbe* and others are mention'd that serv'd in that Function. St. *Paul* also in the Rules that he gives concerning the Age, the Qualifications and the Functions of the *Widows*, seems plainly to mean them; and we do certainly know, that they were in the first Ages of Christianity, and were imploy'd in the Instruction, and about the Baptism of such women as were converted to the Faith. But when afterwards some Scandals rose upon them, as the Council of *Nice* prohibited the Clergy to keep any women that were not very nearly related to them, in their houses; so in the Fifth Century, upon some publick Scandals given

15. Act. 9.

16. Rom. 1.
1 Tim. 5. 9.

given by them, we find, that as they were put down in the Western Church by several Provincial Synods, so they insensibly wore out of the *Greek* Church; and yet none in our days have endeavour'd to revive this Institution. The *kiss of peace* was likewise us'd in the Apostles times, and is mention'd in their Epistles; yet that Rite being perhaps made use of by prophane Scoffers, to represent the Assemblies of the Christians as too licentious, for the black and unjust Imputations cast on their Meetings seem to have no other Foundation but this, it wore out of practice; and I do not hear that any in our days have endeavour'd to bring it again in use. We see likewise, that they had *Love-feasts* before the Eucharist, which was taken from the *Jews*; and tho St. *Paul* complains of some abuses in this practice, he does not condemn it, nor order it to be let fall; yet it wore out, and is not now offer'd to be reviv'd by any among us. Thus we see, that as to Matters that are expresly mention'd in Scripture, with warrants that seem to impose them as standing Rules upon succeeding Ages, the abuses or unfitness which afterwards appear'd in them, were thought sufficient Reasons for departing from them.

1 Pet. 5. 14. 16. Rom. 16. 1 Cor. 16. 20. 2 Cor. 13. 12. 1 Cor. 11. 21.

To these Instances another may be added, that must needs press all that differ from us, one Body only excepted, very much. We know that the first Ritual of Baptism, was by going into the Waters, and being laid as dead backwards all-along in them; and then the persons baptized were rais'd up again, and so they came out of them. This is not only mention'd by St. *Paul*, but in two different places he gives a Mystical Signification of this Rite; that it signified our being *buried with Christ in Baptism*, and our *being raised up with him to a new life*; so that the Phrases of *rising with Christ*, and so *putting on Christ*, as oft as they occur, do plainly relate to this: and yet partly out of modesty, partly in regard to the tenderness of Infants, and the coldness of these Climates, since such a manner might endanger their lives, and we know that *God loves mercy better than sacrifice*, this form of baptizing is as little used by those who separate from us, as by our selves.

6 Rom. 3, 4, 5. 2 Col. 12.

If we consider only the words of the Scripture, without regarding the subsequent practice of the Church, we see reason enough to imagine, that the washing of feet should be kept up in the Church. We have our Saviour's practice for it, and words that seem to import an obligation on us to *wash one anothers feet*, together with the moral use and signification of it, that it ought to teach us Humility. From all these things this Inference seems just, That according to the practices of those who divide from us, the Church must be suppos'd to have an Authority to adjust the Forms of our Religion, in those parts of them that are meerly Ritual, to the Taste, to the Exigencies and Conveniencies of the several Ages and Climates. I say in things that are meerly *Ritual*; for I do not think that these Instances can justify a Church that should alter any main part of a Fœderal Rite instituted by Christ, such as the giving the Chalice in the Sacrament; since this Institution is deliver'd with so particular a Solemnity, and in expres words is appointed to be continu'd *till Christ's second coming*; and the Cup is given as a Seal of the *New Covenant in his blood, for the remission of sins*; which therefore all are requir'd to *drink*.

13. John 14, 15.

We are to consider, that in matters that are meerly Ritual, unless we suppose that Charms are ti'd to particular Rites, there could be no other design in them, but to secure some good purpose, or to keep off some bad practice

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by those outworks: If then the state of Mankind does so alter, that what is good in one Age, is liable to abuse, mistake or superstition in another; there must be suppos'd to be a power in the Pastors of the Church, to alter or add as they see real occasions or good warrants for it. Outward appearances work much on Mankind; things that look light, must dissipate men's Thoughts, as much as graver methods do recollect them. Dancing in the praises of God, would look very wild now; but in other Ages it had a better effect. Since therefore the Christian Religion was to last to the end of the World, and to be spread to very different Climates; and since there is no special Rubrick of Forms digested in it; since there is also no Limitation put upon the Church in this point, but rules are given that sound very much to the contrary, of doing all things that tend to *Order, Edification and Peace*; this great prejudice seems to be fully taken off and answer'd. 14. Rom. 19.

Nor do such Institutions lead to *Superstition*, but rather to the contrary. *Superstition* in its strict Notion is a baseness of mind, that makes us fear without cause, and over-value things too much; imagining that there is more in them than really there is. If things that are ritual were unalterable, there might be from thence more occasion given to Superstition, according to the conceit of the *Jews*, who thinking that their Rites were unalterable, came to fancy from thence, that there was a real value in them, which upon their own account render'd men the more acceptable to God: Superstition is more effectually beat down by the opinion of the alterableness of all external forms, according to the different Exigencies of times and places; since this shews, that Rites are only matters of Order and Decency, which have no real value in them, because they are alterable. If any grow superstitious in the observance of them, this is an abuse to which all things, even the most Sacred, the Sacraments themselves, are liable. 1 Cor. 14. 26,40.

It can as little be said, That these Rules in Ritual Matters are Impositions on our *Christian Liberty*; they are rather the exercise of a main part of it, which is our not being tied up so strictly by a *Law of Commandments*, as the *Jews* were. The Notion of *Liberty*, as it is stated by St. *Paul*, is the Exemption under which Christians were brought from the Precepts of the Mosaical Law: for those who asserted the standing Obligations of that Law, were bringing Christians under a heavy Yoke, in opposition to which, the Apostles asserted their *Liberty*. But it is likewise a true piece of *Liberty*, and a very necessary one for the Societies of Christians, to have among them a power of using or forbearing to use, such external things, as do either advance or obstruct the main ends of Religion. That some Churches may abuse, and that others have abused this Authority by carrying it too far, and imposing too great a load of external performances, is not to be denied: The number of them may become a vast burden, and a distraction rather than a help towards the main Design of Religion. Ludicrous Rites beget prophaneness, and Pompous ones an undue gaity: But the apprehension of an abuse in the extent of an Authority, cannot justify the quarrelling at a few Rites, when it is visible there is no disposition to swell or encrease them. If every year were producing some new Rite or other, there might be good ground to fear, that there would be no end of such Impositions; but this cannot be appli'd to our Circumstances. It is also a question, whether in case that there were indeed too many Rites enjoin'd, every one of which were innocent in it self, so that no 5. Gal. 1.

ſpecial Objection lay againſt any one, but againſt them all, as too many; whether, I ſay, in ſuch a caſe, private perſons were not oblig'd rather to bear their burden, than by ſhaking it off, to rend the Body, and diſturb the Peace and Order of the Church? It ſeems they ought rather to bear it: The Rulers of a Church have indeed much to anſwer for, who preſs her too hard, with burdens that are both uſeleſs and heavy to be born; but the obligations to Peace ſeem to conter-ballance this inexpediency. For tho private perſons muſt judge for themſelves, whether things requir'd of them are *lawful* or *unlawful*, and muſt act accordingly; yet *Expediency* or *Inexpediency* is only to take place, in caſes in which they are entirely at their own diſpoſal, and where the rules of Prudence or Charity can only determine them. But where the quiet and order of the Body is concern'd, Publick orders and determinations being interpos'd, they are not to depart from thoſe, upon their conceiving them inexpedient; for it is certainly more inexpedient and miſchievous to break Publick Order, than it can poſſibly be to practice any Rite, which perhaps if left free to us, might ſeem not expedient, and were better let alone. The expediency of Forms and Rites is a very proper Subject of publick Conſultations; and thoſe who are concern'd in them, will have much to anſwer for to God if they do not weigh this, together with all that counterbalances it, very critically: but in a ſetled ſtate of things, exceptions to the expediency of them can never juſtify the interrupting the Order and Quiet of the Society.

One of the chief of theſe Expediences is, that thoſe Rites have a real tendency to make good Impreſſions on peoples minds; that they put thoſe who practice them in mind of their duty; ſo that there is ſome good ſignification in them. The objection againſt *Significant Ceremonies*, as being of the nature of Sacraments, will appear to be founded on a great miſtake: If we ſtate a little the difference between the ſignifying or expreſſing ſome part of our duty, with ſuch proper acts of our minds, as do become the occaſion, and the ſignifying ſome bleſſing that is offered or conveyed to us by God, in the uſe of that Action; The former is far from the nature of a *Sacrament*; and indeed is only a mute way of ſpeaking: For actions as well as words may become inſtituted Signs to expreſs our thoughts. But indeed if we ſhould fancy, that ſuch Rites did offer or convey into our minds thoſe things that are ſignifi'd by them, as a fœderal Inſtitution, to which a Divine Vertue were annexed, this were to conſider them as Sacraments; the Inſtitution of which is unqueſtionably beyond the power of the Church: but it is quite another thing, when Rites are appointed as means only to raiſe in our minds ſuitable and correſponding thoughts.

To inſtance this in one particular; If we pretended that by the uſe of the *Croſs in Baptiſm*, a divine vertue were conveyed to the Perſon baptized, that deadned him more entirely to the World, and wrought him up to a greater conformity to Chriſt; then here were a new *Sacrament* ſet up, which could not be juſtified: But when it is only meant, as an exhibiting the form of the Croſs of Chriſt, to put us in mind of our obligation to imitate him, and to ſuffer for him; here is only a Rite that ſpeaks to us in an Action, which is explained by the words that accompany it.

It is more important which is urged from the abuſe of Rites to Idolatrous Practices: This was the firſt objection that was ſtarted among us againſt the *Habits* in the Worſhip of God; and had without doubt a very plauſible appear-

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ance; since a great part of the *Mosaical* Law seemed to be the establishing many Rites, merely to put them in a great opposition to the *Gentiles*, and to set them at the vastest distance possible from their Idolatrous or Magical Practices: Yet at the same time many others of those Instituted Rites, are by some very Learned Men proved to have been taken from other Practices of the same Idolaters, that were more innocent in themselves, tho abused, as the rest of their Rites were, to Idolatry. The *Jews* had certainly very much corrupted their Religion by the addition of many Rites, and by their over-valuing those Additions: And yet two of these were made use of by our Saviour to be the Sacraments of his Church. But besides this, a great difference is to be made between Rites that were in their first use invented for the pomp of Idolatry, and were in their first use applied to it, and those which had been in use long before those Idolatrous Practices begun, and were afterwards applied to them. In these last, if their abuse is taken away, and the first and simple usage is revived, this seems to be no compliance with either Idolatry or Superstition. To go on with the former Instance; we find the Primitive Christians used the making a Cross in the Air, or upon their Bodies on many occasions; afterwards, when a Divine Vertue was fancied to accompany that Ritual Action, it was used in Baptism as a sort of Incantation; for with the use of it, *the Devil was adjured* to go out of the person that was to be baptized; such an usage made it a Sacramental and a Superstitious Action; and if it had been still retained in that form, as it was in the first Reformation of our Liturgy in King *Edward* the VIth's time, I do not see how it could have been justified; but since it had been an ancient Form to use the Sign of the Cross, the Church might well have retained this in some of her Rites; and it belonged to none of them so properly, as to the Initiatory Sacrament, in which the first use of it was retained, and the succeeding abuse was laid aside. Since also we find that the Primitive Christians received the other Sacrament in the posture in which they prayed to God; and since the posture in which all our Prayers are now made, is *kneeling*, it might be very proper to go through this whole Office from beginning to end, in the posture of Prayer: But this could not be so well excused if the posture were left free till the Consecration; and if then only *kneeling* were required, this were indeed to continue a practice that had been abused by Idolatry, which could not be justified: So that the abuse of Forms may require the altering them from that method in which they were abused, but cannot import an obligation to abstain wholly from the use of them in another method. It may be a very just matter for a publick deliberation, whether such things ought to be retained, they being freed from such Abuses, or not. On the one hand, The People who are apt to be much struck with a total change of outward Forms, especially when that is suddenly made, may be more easily brought about, if the Alterations are not too sensible, but that some things seem to remain, to which they had been accustomed, and for which they retained a value. Now since Mankind is so weak, that some lesser Frailties ought to be indulged, while more Criminal ones are not to be spared, here was a very specious ground to persuade the continuance of those Rites; and that the rather, because we find the Apostles themselves complied with the *Jews* in Instances of a much higher nature. 16 Acts 3. 21 Acts 24.

They circumcised some; they observed *Jewish* Rites, and *to the Jews they became Jews*, as they became *all things to all men*. St. *Paul* took vows on him, 1 Cor 9. 20.

and went to the Temple to be purifi'd, which could not be done but with a *Sacrifice*: And though he ſtill ſtood upon the exemption of the *Gentiles* from the obligations of their Law; yet he himſelf, together with other born *Jews*, complied with them in their Obſervances. Now when it is conſidered, that theſe were typical Laws that were accompliſhed by the coming of our Saviour, and that the *Jews* pleaded ſtill for the continuance of them, ſo that it was indeed the main controverſy of that time; it will appear, that the compliance of the Apoſtles in ſuch things, was liable to much juſter Objections than any that can be brought againſt obedience to Conſtitutions, that are about things of their own nature innocent and indifferent. But yet we ſee the Apoſtles judged, that as long as the Temple ſtood, and that God's Wrath was not yet poured out on that Nation, there were ſtill ſome among them, that as a *remnant* were to be gained to Chriſtianity, and therefore while there was ground to hope for that, they went on in that condeſcention to their infirmity, obſerving that very Law which was then maintained by the *Jews* with the higheſt inſolence and cruelty poſſible againſt Chriſt and his Followers. When this Point is well weighed in its full extent, and in all its conſequences, it will, I hope, ſatisfy many, how far ſo great an end as the publick Peace, and the edification of the whole Body, ought to be purſued, when the Apoſtles went ſo far in order to the gaining of a few.

And here it will be no impertinent digreſſion, to obſerve the Rules that St. *Paul* lays down to Chriſtians in this whole matter: I cannot think that it was ſo fully opened in Epiſtles that have been preſerved down to our days, as a main part of the Canon of our Faith, without a ſpecial Providence of God, that in thoſe Rules we might ſee our own duty in the management of ſuch Controverſies as ſhould afterwards ariſe: Since beſides a hiſtorical knowledge of the ſtate of that time, this is all the uſe that it ſeems we can now make of ſuch long Diſcourſes, and Arguings; and if this can be well ſtated, it will be a ſure thread to guide us.

Firſt then, St. *Paul* leads men above the valuing ſuch matters too much; as if the being of the one or the other ſide, ſignified any thing towards their peace with God: For all fierce Zealots are apt to imagine, that by their zeal they pleaſe God, and atone for great faults. Therefore to take away that falſe
5 Gal. 6. Conceit, this is often repeated, That in *Chriſt Jeſus neither Circumciſion nor*
6 Gal. 15. *Uncircumciſion a vailed any thing, but a new creature, or faith which worketh by love, and the keeping the Commandments of God*; and that the Chriſtian Reli-
14. Rom. 17. gion, or *the Kingdom of God conſiſted not in meat and drink*, that is, in Rituals, concerning the diſtinction of Meats clean and unclean, but in much higher
V. 18. things, *righteouſneſs, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt*: And he ſeems to aſſert, that whoſoever ſerved Chriſt in theſe things, *was acceptable to God,*
V. 5. *and ought to be approved of men*; whatſoever his ſenſe might be as to all other things.

Another Poſition laid down, is, That *every man ought to be fully perſuaded in his own mind*; to have clear Principles, and to frame theſe into as diſtinct Rules as poſſibly he could: And this is the meaning, of *doing all things in faith*; which word ſignifies *perſuaſion*, and ought to have been ſo rendered
V. 23. here: And then all thoſe difficulties that ariſe out of the miſunderſtanding of that word, would ceaſe; ſo that the paraphraſe of thoſe ſo oftencited words will run thus, *Haſt thou a perſuaſion? have it within thy ſelf; ſo that*

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thou mayst appeal to God upon it: For happy is the man that is so setled, that he does not waver in a distraction of thoughts, sometimes approving, and at other times condemning the same thing; for while a man is still doupting, he is condemned within himself. For instance, If he eats freely of all Meats, without regarding the *Jewish* distinctions, and yet has within him an opinion of the obligatory force of those Laws, he does not act upon clear Principles and Persuasions; for while a man acts without these, not knowing but that he may be sinning against God, he does then really sin, since he does things which he thinks are sins, so that they become sins to him. This is a plain account of those words, which as it agrees exactly to their natural signification, so it shuts out all the difficulties which arise out of them. For the word rendred by *doubting*, according to the sense in which it stands in all the other parts of the *New Testament*, signifies the *making distinction*; so that the meaning of it is, *He who thinks that there is still a distinction between meats clean and unclean, is very guilty if he eats as long as he is under that persuasion.*

A third Rule laid down by St. *Paul*, is, That in all such matters, men ought not to assume an Authority to *judge others*; that is, to impose things upon them, as if they had a Judiciary Authority over them. *Let not man judge* 2 Col. 16. *you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day*: that is, Let no man in matters left at liberty, pretend to an Authority over another; for God is the sole Judge of all men: And let no man *judge* his Brother, that is, offer to call him to an account of his Actions; *for we must all stand at the judgement-seat of Christ*, where he who is our only Judge, as a Law giver, will then be our *Judge*, by calling us to an account of our Actions: Upon this follow the Rules of mens deportment towards one another. Those that have larger Principles, and higher Notions; who in that respect are *stronger*, and who by that freedom of mind and thought, did eat without those nice distinctions of clean and unclean, ought not to despise such as were yet fearful and straitned in their thoughts, and durst not emancipate themselves, as if they were men of low thoughts, and narrow minds: On the other hand, Those who were still entangled with an opinion of the obligation of the *Mosaical* Law, ought not to condemn such as acted with more freedom, as if they were loose and lawless men.

To this a fourth Assertion is added, That in such diversities of apprehensions, men of both sides might be received and accepted by God, both acting with good Intentions, and following sincerely their Persuasions. *One man regarded a* 14. Rom. 6. *day*: He observed the *Jewish* Festivities, their New Moons, and days of rest, called by the general word of *Sabbaths*; yet in doing this, under the sense of the Obligations of that Law lying still over him, *he regarded it to the Lord*: Another, who reckoned himself freed from that Yoke, did acknowledge, that this his Liberty was occasioned by the Christian Religion; so he, in not observing it, acknowledged that Religion which had set him free. The same Rule is also instanced in observing the distinction of Meats; the one did eat freely, and thanked God for that liberty: while the other did abstain from forbidden Meats, and thanked God for that Law by which the *Jewish* Nation had so many special Priviledges beyond all other Nations, so that God was honoured by both, even in all that diversity of practices: And perhaps, a diversity of practices, if with that, a tender and perfect Charity could be maintained, might be yet a greater honour to Religion, than an absolute ageement in all points; since it is a higher Instance of the power of Religion,

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if men can love one another, notwithſtanding a diverſity in opinion and practice; than if they loved one another, being in all points of the ſame mind, and agreeing in the ſame practices.

After theſe, came two Rules relating to private mens behaviour towards one another in ſuch caſes: The one is, *not to ſet a ſtumbling-block, or an occaſion to fall,*
V. 13. *in another man's way*; that is, not to uſe our liberty in ſuch inſtances, or on ſuch occaſions, as may draw other men to act in imitation of us, againſt their own Conſciences. This is the true notion of *giving ſcandal*, or *the laying a trap* in the way of another, by which he may fall, or be catched: And this every man is to avoid, when it is free for him to act, or not, as he pleaſes; for in that caſe only, he is under this obligation and caution; ſince otherwiſe, if he is determined by any Law, Divine or Humane, he muſt go on and do his duty, without conſidering what conſequences may happen upon it, for which he is not accountable; ſince he is not at liberty to diſpoſe of himſelf, but is concluded by a higher Authority. The other Rule is, That we ought, as much as may be, to avoid doing any thing that may *grieve other Chriſtians*, which is ſaid to be *walking*
V. 15. *uncharitably*; ſince we ought to have ſuch regard, even to the tenderneſs and weakneſs of our Brethren, as not to do ſuch things as may wound or trouble them, ſtill under the former ſuppoſition, that we are fully at our own liberty, and under no law nor obligation to the contrary.

Theſe are the Rules laid down by St. *Paul*; which, when well conſidered, and rightly underſtood, will give a great light into this whole Controverſy. By theſe it will appear, that even the Apoſtles themſelves, who might have aſſumed a higher ſtrain of Authority, yet had great regards to the frailties of thoſe they governed: And although moſt of theſe Poſitions and Rules do ſuppoſe men to be in a ſtate of an unreſtrained liberty, ſo that they do not belong to our caſe, in which Laws and Conſtitutions have already determined us; yet they ought ſtill to have great weight with thoſe that are not concluded by Laws, and all ſuch as may have the making or reviewing of Laws under their care and deliberation.

But I have opened this matter more fully than was, perhaps, neceſſary to my preſent purpoſe, which only required, that I ſhould clear ſome Paſſages in St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles that are applied to the Points now under examination, though they do not at all belong to them; ſince all that is in St. *Paul*, relates only to ſuch things as were entirely left to mens own liberty, and in which it was free to them to act which way ſoever they pleaſed; which are not at all applicable to eſtabliſhed rules, ſetled by Law, and recommended by Ancient practice. It is true, that no Age of the Church ſince the Apoſtles days, can make Laws for ſucceeding Ages; ſince the Paſtors of every Age have the ſame Authority that the Paſtors of any precedent Age had after the times of Inſpiration: Whatever was done in a former Age, may be altered in a ſubſequent one: And therefore all thoſe Rules, of the ſubordination of Churches one to another, being taken from the diſpoſition of the *Roman* Empire, *Europe* being now totally moulded into another frame, are now at the diſcretion of Princes to cotinue or change them at their pleaſure: And all the Rituals of the Church are in the power of every Age to alter or continue them as they ſhall ſee cauſe; but till they are altered, they bind, not by reaſon of any Authority that former Ages had over the preſent; but becauſe the preſent Age, by not repealing former Rules and Canons, does tacitly and interpretatively confirm and

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renew them: For if the Paſtors of the preſent Age, in concurrence with, and a due ſubordination to the Civil Powers, have an Authority to make Laws or Canons in ſuch matters, they have likewiſe a power to continue ſuch as were made in any former Age, and they are preſumed, and in Law taken to do that, till they repeal them.

I have now gone through the general Plea that is brought againſt our Conſtitutions from general Topicks; and have, I hope, ſhewed that there is no force in any part of it. I come next to conſider ſuch things as are objected more ſpecially to ſeveral particulars in our Conſtitution.

6. They except to the Government of the Church, becauſe of the different Ranks of *Biſhop*, *Prieſt* and *Deacon*, whereas the Scriptures uſe *Biſhop* and *Prieſt* ſo promiſcuouſly, that from thence it ſeems reaſonable to infer, that they are one and the ſame Function, and that there ought to be but two Ranks, *Biſhop* and *Deacon*, in the Church; But thoſe who object this, have really among them but one Function and Order, ſince they have no *Deacons*, in the ſenſe of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, who are a Degree of Men dedicated to the Service of God, out of which, as any ſerved well in it, they were advanced to a ſuperior Degree, and were ever eſteemed a Sacred Order of Men. There are none ſuch among thoſe who urge this Matter againſt us. The Promiſcuous uſe of Names does not prove the Offices the ſame. The Apoſtles are called, ſometimes, *Deacons* or *Miniſters*, and ſo are their Companions in Labour; for the term *Diacon*, ſignifying any one that *Miniſtred*: It was not then appropriated to the loweſt Order, no more than *Presbyter* was to the ſecond; for the Apoſtles call themſelves ſometimes *Deacons*; ſo that from hence an Argument might be drawn, as well to prove that *Deacons* are equal in Rank to the higheſt Order of *Biſhops*. We plainly ſee, That God ſetled three Orders of Officers in the *Jewiſh* Temple: We ſee alſo, in their Synagogues, that there were three different Ranks taken probably from the Model of the Temple: We ſee our Saviour choſe twelve Apoſtles, and afterwards Seventy Diſciples, having in that, no doubt, a regard both to the numbers of their Tribes, and of their Sanhedrin: We plainly ſee, that during the Apoſtles lives, the governing and ordering of the Church was in them, yet they conſtituted ſome in their Name to govern a large extent of Churches; and by their Epiſtles to theſe, it is plain, That the Power of governing thoſe Churches, and of ordaining new Officers in them, belonged to them; they being the Perſons to whom that truſt was committed, with ſolemn Charges given them for it by the Apoſtles: We plainly ſee two diſtinct Orders of *Biſhop* and *Deacon*, as two Sacred Functions that were to labour in the work of the Goſpel; and we find by the ſhort Epiſtles in the beginnings of the *Revelation*, that there was one Man who had the Immediate Charge of thoſe Churches, to whom every thing relating to them is addreſſed, as to a Perſon that was accountable for the reſt, and that by conſequence muſt be ſuppos'd to have an Authority over them: We ſee immediately after the days of the Apoſtles, that all the Churches were caſt into one Mould, of *Biſhop*, *Prieſt* and *Diacon*: This taking place every where, and that at a time when no Meetings of the Clergy could be held to eſtabliſh any ſuch Form, and that no Laws of Princes were made to Enact it, and no Men of Authority could ſo early and ſo univerſally have brought ſuch a change into the Order of the Church; when there was nothing to tempt any to affect Preheminence: Labour and Sufferings being all that then follow'd this Superiour Rank; and yet within leſs than

1 Cor. 3. 5. 2 Cor. 3. 6. & 6. 4. & 11. 23. 3 Eph. 7. 1 Col. 23, 25. 6 Eph. 21. 4 Col. 7. 1 Theſſ. 3. 2.

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one Century after the days of the Apoſtles, we do plainly ſee, that this was the Conſtitution, even of thoſe Churches that had been gathered and ſetled by the Apoſtles themſelves. Among whom ſo viſible a thing as the Order in which they had put the Church, could not poſſibly be ſoon forgotten, and this was not complain'd of by the Sects of thoſe days, particularly the *Montaniſts*, that had ſo fair an appearance by their praying and faſting ſo much, that not only *Tertullian* was drawn away by it, but even the Church ſeems to have taken a Tincture from ſome of their Methods; whether in imitation of them, or on deſign to out-do them, is not ſo eaſy to determine; yet nothing of this kind was ever objected, as if the Church had by the Authority given to Biſhops, departed from the Apoſtolical Cuſtoms.

Now I will acknowledge, that a bare practice, tho very Ancient, ſuch as the giving the Euchariſt to Infants, without a colour for it in Scripture, ought not to conclude us: but when there is a great deal in Scripture that looks favourably to a thing, tho the proof from the words alone ſhould not ſeem full and poſitive, and when the firſt Writings and cleareſt Practices of the Ages that immediately follow'd, confirms ſuch an Expoſition, then we have all that is poſſible for us to pretend to, for giving a fixed and determinate ſenſe to ſuch paſſages. From all this then it is clear, that we are now upon the ſame Conſtitution as to the main, on which the Apoſtles ſetled the Churches, and that we have all the reaſon that a thing of this nature is capable of, to conclude, That the diſtinction of *Biſhop*, *Prieſt* and *Deacon*, was ſetled by the Apoſtles themſelves, and is related to by many places in the *New Teſtament*.

The diviſion of the World into Dioceſſes, larger or narrower, as well as of Pariſhes, ſome being exceſſively large, and others as unreaſonably ſmall, does not a whit alter the nature of the thing in it ſelf; ſince tho' it were to be deſir'd, that Pariſhes were nearer an equality in point of Labour and Cure; yet this is an Inconvenience that we muſt bear, and not diſturb the Church, by ſeeking undue Remedies for it: So ſuch Diſorders, as a length of time, a corruption of Manners, a change of Governments, and Civil Policies, has brought into a Conſtitution, may put it out of our Power to procure the Redreſs of many things, that yet will as little warrant a renting the Body, or dividing the Church upon any ſuch account, as it would juſtify the lazy Sloth of ſuch as may bring things to a better State, and yet do not ſet about it, nor do heartily endeavour it.

182. Another head of Objections is to ſet-forms of Prayer in general, as a ſtinting of the *Spirit of Prayer*; of which mention is often made in the *New Teſtament*, and which ought to have ſcope given to it; ſince it is a mean to rouze up and quicken heavy minds, which become flat when accuſtom'd to a conſtant form of Words, that render both the Clergy lazy, and the People Dead: But when it is conſider'd, that every Man's words become a form, to which all the reſt of the Aſſembly is limited; the queſtion then lies naturally between the ſudden conceptions of one Man, who is often young, raſh, without Judgment, and who always ſpeaks on the ſudden; and between a form well digeſted and prepared by a Body of wiſe and good Men: Since then the People muſt be under a Form, it may ſeem much more reaſonable that they ſhould be under ſuch a form, than under the other; and that the rather, ſince we ſee *Moſes*, *David*, and the *Prophets* of old, gave the Jewiſh Church ſo many forms, both for Prayers and Praiſes: We know that in our Saviour's time, the *Jews* had a ſtated

Liturgy

Liturgy of their own; which our Saviour was so far from blaming, that he himself prescribed his Disciples a Form, and compos'd it out of theirs; laying together so many Petitions drawn out of their Prayers. as answer'd his end, in appointing his own: And Praises seeming to be the sublimest Acts of Worship, in which the Soul ought to arise to its highest Elevation; it is not easily accountable why so much excitation should be required in Prayer, while Men are left to be still flat and formal in their Praises. It is not to be deni'd, but that among the extraordinary Gifts that follow'd the wonderful Effusion of the Holy Ghost, one was, That Men were Inspir'd to offer up such Prayers to God as comprehended the necessities of whole Congregations; it appearing in those Prayers, that the Spirit in him that pray'd, searched all their Hearts, and so did prompt him with groanings that were unutterable; and it thus appearing, that the *Spirit*, or *Inspiration* which moved any to pray in this sort, *searched all things*; every Man finding the sense of his own Heart thus open'd, together with suitable Intercessions, it was from thence evident, that this was the *Spirit of God*, making Intercession for the Saints, in the mouth and words of the Inspir'd Person. This being a plain account of those words of *Praying in* or by *the Spirit*, and well agreeing with every thing said concerning it in the *New Testament*, it is a great mistake, if we in these days, should expect any such Assistances from God: So that now a readiness of new or tender Expressions in Prayer, is an effect of a quickness of Thought, a liveliness of Imagination, together with a good Memory, much conversant in Scripture-Phrases, and long practised in that way. All things by a long use grow flat to minds that are not seriously awaken'd; but extemporary Prayers do rather kill than feed true Devotion, since they must be hearkened to as Discourses, which is a distraction to him that Prays after them, whereas those accustom'd to set-forms, have only the things themselves that their Devotion relate to in their view; so they are certainly less tempted to distraction, than they must be who follow the other way. 8. Rom. 28, 29.

Those sudden starts that are given to the mind by soft Words, and melting Images of things, may be according to the different Compositions of Men more or less useful to them in their secret Exercises, but they ought not to be let in upon publick Assemblies, which being made up of a great variety of Tempers, must be entertain'd only with such Devotions that suit with all their Conditions, and do equally quadrate to all their necessities; and thus it is not only natural, but necessary for all Men who will maintain Order in their Worship, and will frame it in so diffus'd an extent, as to take all equally within it, that they have set and stated Forms; and these ought to be cast into the plainest and most comprehensive simplicity possible, since that is always suited to all Mankind, whereas Men are vastly diversifi'd in every thing that is lively or fanciful. Such a way of Worship ought neither to be unreasonably long, nor excessively short. The length must be proportion'd to what the greater part of Mankind can bear; it ought also to be so diversifi'd, that Mens minds be not kept too long at any one part of it, or their Bodies in any one posture; and there should be as great a compass in it, for taking in the several Acts and Offices of Devotion, as may be; and in all these respects, it may be safely affirmed, That our Forms have as few defects, are as little liable to Objections, and are indeed as perfect, not only as the Forms or Liturgies of any Church, that we know of, Ancient or Modern, but are as

perfect as we can in reason expect in any thing that came from Men not immediately inspir'd. Any small exceptions that may be made, as they do all admit of very good Answers, so can never be put in the Ballance with the Peace and Order of the Church, and the Edification that the Members of our Body might receive from such Pure and Spirital Devotions. If Men grow too languid and flat in them, even this is much more supportable than the gross Affections, and the scandalous Indecencies that are so common, to say no worse, in the tumultuary way. Man is indeed so made, that he grows soon corrupt and Dead in what method so ever he is put: but as Mankind bears the longest and the most generally with common food, and is less disgusted at the continuance of it, than it would be with more chosen Delicacies, which would become much sooner nauseous than simpler Nourishment; so it may be positively affirm'd, that grave and well-compos'd Devotions, fitly diversifi'd, and often broken, as ours are, have not only Reason and Authority clearly on their side, but have great Advantages in them, and few disadvantages to ballance those. They are such as are proper for us to offer up to God; they have in them all the Gravity and Solemnity that becomes a Religious Assembly; they comply with our very Infirmities, and give us such breathings as may be necessary for loose and vagrant minds; and they carry in them the whole Complex of a Religious Service: So in going that round with due degrees of Attention, we are sure we offer up to God the several Branches of that *Reasonable*
12. Rom. 1. *Service*, or *Rational Worship*, that we owe him.

66. 3. The more particular exceptions lie chiefly against our forms in the two Sacraments: The *Anabaptists* object our not *Dipping* when we *Baptize*; which was not only the practice of Christ and his Apostles, but seems to be recommended by the Mystical Allusions made to the being *Buried* in the Water, and the being again *Raised up* out of it, as was formerly observ'd. Indeed if we could think that a Divine Vertue follow'd the application of the Water only to the parts washed with it, so that there were a sort of a Charm in it, we must acknowledge our Baptism to be defective; but since *Water* is only us'd as an Emblem of the Purity of our Religion, it seems in the nature of things to be all one, whether the Person Baptized is put into the Water, or if the Water is put upon him. The design of Baptism is a Fœderal Sponsion, upon which Water is to be us'd, with a determined form of words; and when these are observed, all that is primarily intended in it, is observed; nor will Allusions made to the Rites with which this was at first managed, prove that those ought to be perpetual, these being only devout and instructive Thoughts offer'd upon the occasion of such forms. Yet after all, our Church is so little liable to censure in this matter, that the Rule given in the *Rubrick* is first for *Dipping*; *Sprinking* is only allowed of; so that tho it comes to be more commonly practised, yet no Person that desires it in the form of *Dipping* can be denied it among us, since it is the form that is chiefly favoured by the *Rubrick*, tho the practice runs in a current the other way.

66. 4. There is a more important Scruple rais'd upon Infant Baptism, since the Persons mention'd to be Baptized in the Scriptures were all of Age, capable to answer and promise for themselves; and since by the Institution of Baptism, the *making of Men Disciples* is set before it, and the *Teaching them to observe all that Christ hath Commanded* comes immediately after it, both these seem to be Characters importing that they should be of an Age capable of Instruction, since

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They only can make *the answer of a good Conscience*: So that the Baptizing upon a Vow or Promise made by another, seems to be a new sort of Fœderal Sponsion, not instituted by Christ, and by consequence not warranted by the Gospel. Nor will the Argument from Circumcision appear conclusive, when it is consider'd that Females not being capable of it, that Rite seems rather to have been a national Mark, to distinguish them as *Abraham*'s Posterity from other Nations, than a Rite relating to the Blessings of a future state.

But to all this we must answer, That since our Saviour took Baptism from the *Jews*, it being visible that they were not at all surprized at St. *John Baptist*'s Baptizing, they only questioning him upon his Mission and Authority for it; we have reason to conclude, that he took it from them as they practised it: And we find by their Writings, that when any Proselytes came over to their Religion, they not only Baptized them, but also their Children. This being their practice, and our Saviour making no Exceptions as to this Particular, but saying words that plainly favour it, *Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God*, or the Gospel-dispensation, this is no small Argument for it: But that which seems to determine the matter, is the resolution that St. *Paul* gives in a Case that must have been very common in those days, when one of the married Parties was converted to Christianity, the other remaining still in Infidelity, he determines that the Husband ought not to put away the Wife, nor the Wife leave the Husband; and the reason he adds is, That there was a Communication of *Sanctification* from the believing to the unbelieving Party, which descended to their Children, who should be *otherwise Unclean, but now they were Holy*. Now it is to be consider'd, that in the New Testament *Holy*, or *Saint*, and a *Christian*, stand promiscuously for one another; and the word *Holy*, can only signify either a real inward Holiness, or a Holiness of dedication, in which sense all things appropriated to God are said to be *Holy*. A Believer could not Communicate a real Holiness either to the unbelieving Yoke-fellow, or to the Issue, since that is personal, and cannot be derived, or descend. The only *Holiness* that he could derive, was a right to consecrate the common Issue to God; which is in some sort a *Sanctifying* of one another. This is a plain and natural meaning of these words; and tho they should not seem to import it so necessarily, but that other glosses might be put upon them, yet the early practice of the Church mention'd by *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, and most copiously by St. *Cyprian*, seems to be a sure Commentary upon them, this being a ritual and visible thing, in which we may much more safely have recourse to Tradition, than in matters of Doctrine; it being here remembred, That a Practice without warrant in Scripture, is not to be so regarded as a Practice that seems to have favourable, if not clear warrants for it in Scripture. This also agrees with the natural Order of the World: Children being put in the power of their Parents, by the Laws of Nature, who, considering their Incapacity, must act in their Name, and may both procure Rights and Priviledges to them, and also lay ties and engagements upon them. It is then suitable to the extent of the mercy of God in the Gospel, that Parents may offer up their Children to Christ, that they may be tied by them to his Religion, and received into the blessings and privileges of it. When this whole matter is thus laid together, I doubt not but the lawfulness of Infant-Baptism will evidently appear; and if it is *Lawful*, then according to what was at first made out, the Church may oblige all her Members to it.

Mark 10. 13.

1 Cor. 7. 14.

66.5 The Practice of having Sponsors, being but an increase of the security given for the Person's Education in Christianity, the care of the Parents being supposed, as already bound upon them by their natural Relation to their Children, and it being a great mean, if well managed, of knitting Neighbours together in new and Christian Bonds, all Exceptions to such a Custom seem very ill-grounded; and their answering so positively in the Name of the Child, does according to the nature of all Acts in the Name of Infants, import only, that as far as in them lies, care shall be taken that the Infant shall make good those engagements in due time. Our affirming so positively, That all Children who are Baptized, and die before they grow to be capable of committing any actual Sin, are certainly saved; does not only agree with the Idea's of the infinite goodness of God, but also with this declaration, That the Promises of the Gospel are made *to all Christians, and to their Children.*

66.6

2 Acts 39.

66.7. The most general Scruple against our Form in Baptism, remains yet to be discussed: That we have added to it the Sign of the Cross, which is a piece of Popish Superstition. Indeed, if we use it as was formerly observed, as they do, with an adjuration of the Devil to go out, and *not to presume to violate the Sign of the Cross*; if we breathed *cross-ways*, and pretended by that to infuse Divine Virtues and Blessings, here were just objections; for in so doing, we should assume a power to make Sacraments, and to affix Divine Powers to Institutions of our own: Therefore nothing of this being retained among us, all the Papistical and Superstitious use of the Cross in Baptism is thrown out: But since the Primitive Christians did so glory in the Cross, that in stead of being ashamed of the Reproach of it, they used it upon most occasions: Our Reformers designing to restore Primitive Christianity, thought, that though the abuse of this to so much Superstition, made them supercede the frequent practice of it; yet in this first initiation to Christianity, it was reasonable to use it, once for all, but with words that shewed they retained none of the Superstitious Conceits of Popery, and meant only thereby to own the receiving all Christians into the Doctrine of the Cross, and to an obligation to follow Christ, bearing his Cross. And thus it is plain, that this practice is in it self not only innocent, but decent: and that there were very plausible Reasons, to say no more, for enjoining it; so that the not using it, is the disobeying a just Authority, in a lawful Injunction.

66.8. *Kneeling in the Eucharist*, seems not only liable to an imputation of Idolatry; but is also under this further prejudice, that it is in none of the Ancient Rituals On the contrary, we have all reason to believe, that for many Ages they did communicate *standing*: since all *kneeling* in Churches on *Sundays*, or in the time between *Easter* and *Whitsunday*, was esteemed a crime in *Tertullian*'s time, and was forbidded by a Canon of the Council of *Nice*.

This Being that, of all the Objections raised against us, that touches in the tenderest part, since this is the great Symbole of the Union of Christians, and that in which most formally *the Communion of the Church* consists, it will be necessary to examine it very narrowly. It is then, first, to be considered, that outward Actions do signify only that which by a general consent, or an express declaration is agreed on as their sense and importance. *Kneeling* to Kings, is understood to be only the highest Act of Civil Respect; and therefore it is liable to no imputation of *Idolatry*. Therefore if there is an express declaration made of the importance of this Action, that it is neither an Adoration of the

Bread

Bread and Wine, nor of the Person of Christ, as supposed Corporally present, but only a worshipping of God in the acknowledgment of the great Blessings there exhibited to us, then this Posture cannot be stretched beyond this express Declaration; nor is this that *kneeling* which is enjoined by the Church of *Rome*; for that is only a falling down at the *Elevation*, in acknowledgment of the miraculous change then made: Whereas ours is a continued posture of *Prayer*, in which we continue during the whole Office: So that *Kneeling*, as used by us, does in many respects differ from the *Knoeling* used in the Church of *Rome*.

As for that specious Pretence, That in the Primitive times they did not *kneel* at the receiving the Sacrament; it is only an appearance of a Reason. In the Primitive times, they had a notion of *Kneeling* as an abject Posture, which only became *Penitents*, or the times of *fasting*: They thought that upon other occasions *standing* in Prayer had an appearance of faith and confidence in God; and agreed with those comfortable assurances, and that joy to which we are called in the Gospel: And therefore those who were in the full *peace of the Church*, were to *stand* up at Prayers; which was most indispensably observed on Sundays, and the Fifty days from *Easter* to *Pentecost*. But *standing* was then their posture of Prayer, so they received the Sacrament in the posture appropriated to Prayer; and it were easy to shew, from those very Fathers who mention *standing* as the posture in which the Eucharist was received, that they did consider it as a posture of *Adoration*, and so required all Christians to *adore* as they received it. Now, in a course of many Ages, this difference of several degrees in Prayer, and the postures proper to them, is quite worn out; so that *kneeling* is become the common posture of all Prayer whatsoever: Therefore we receiving in a posture of Prayer, do in that follow the constant practice of all Christians, in all the best Ages.

Kneeling is a matter merely ritual; and being now grown the common Rite, expressing our humility in Prayer, we do not depart from the Spirit and Intentions of the Primitive Church; since we receive the Eucharist in our posture of prayer, as they did in theirs. The plausible Exception to all this, is, That since our Saviour did institute this Sacrament, *at a Table after Supper*, it is a needless departing from his Practice, and the Pattern that he hath left us, to receive it in any other posture. If this Objection had any force, it should oblige us to receive *leaning at ing*, according to the posture of sitting at table in those days; and if we must adhere to the Circumstances of the Institution, the time *after Supper*, and the place *an upper room*, will be as obligatory upon us as the Posture, since all these things are of the same order and value. But to go to the bottom of this Objection, and to shew by a clear parity the just reason of departing from our Saviour's practice in this particular.

It is to be remembred, That when *Moses* gave out the Institution of the Paschal Festivity, he limited that people by express words to a posture, They were *to eat it with their loins girt, and their shoos on their feet, with staves in ther hands,* 12. Exod. 11. thus ready to march. There is nothing in the Institution that gives the least hint, as if this was not meant to be a lasting Precept: So here is much more than a bare Example, a Precept given in very plain words, without any limitation of time: And yet when the *Israelites* were setled in the Land of *Canaan*, at rest, and no more obliged to march, this change of their Circumstances did, from the natural suitableness of things, bring on a change in this

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part of that Festivity: They *sate* about their Tables, or rather *leaned*, and so they did eat the Lamb in that lazy posture, that expressed the *Rest* which God had given them. And we are sure, that in this they committed no error; since our Saviour himself justified their practice, by conforming to it. So here more than a bare practice, an express Institution in a ritual matter, is changed by a Church, that in all such things seems to have been much more tied up to the letter of their Law, than the Christian Church is; yet a great alteration in their Circumstances made them conclude, that this ought to be altered, and in that they did right. Now if we will apply this to the Christian *Passover*; Christ being in a state of Humiliation, and in *the form of a Servant*, institutes it; and does it in a familiar posture of Equality with his Disciples at Table, but gives no rule how, as to that particular it ought to be observed for the future, as *Moses* had done. Afterwards, a vast change happens in his visible Condition; he is raised from the dead, and exalted up into Heaven: Upon this change therefore, with relation to his Human nature, that was vastly more important than that which had happened to the *Jews* when they were brought into the *Land of Promise*; it seems to have been highly congruous to that practice of the *Jews*, with which the first Christians could not be unacquainted, for them to have changed the posture from the appearance of Familiarity, to that of Respect; and to have brought it to the *Posture* which they use in Prayer, and their other Devotions. And this I think is a full answer to every thing that can be objected to our Posture in Receiving.

06. 9. Another exception some have to our Administration of this Sacrament, That there is no previous examination of those who are admitted to it; that a promiscuous multitude comes without any notice given, or enquiry made after them; tho we are commanded *to note such as walk disorderly, and to have no fellowship with them, that they may be ashamed*: nay, with *Brethren*, that is, Christians who live scandalously, *not so much as to eat*. To this it is to be answer'd, That a great difference is to be made between a Church that lies yet under some defects, which she laments and cannot get them to be effectually supplied, and a Church that is viciously faulty, and blamable in any thing she does. If the acts of Church-Communion are in themselves lawful and good, so that particular persons are obliged to nothing that can be made appear to be unlawful; it can be no reason for them to separate from it, because other things are not done which perhaps are fitting and may seem necessary. But a further distinction is to be made, between things commanded by a Divine Precept, and such things as are only recommended by the Practice and Rules of the Church. St. *Paul* does only prescribe this, That *every man examine himself*, but does not impose it upon any to examine others; and the true Importance of the word render'd *Examine*, is *Approve*; that is, Let a man so consider himself, as to see whether he is *approved* of by his own Conscience: but this gives no other person an Authority to search into, *examine*, or *approve* such as come to the Sacrament. There is therefore no Rule given in the *New Testament* for any such previous enquiry: it was indeed a very Ancient, and is upon very many accounts a good and useful practice so to do. But how criminal soever a defect in obeying a Divine Law may be, it can be no such matter not to observe even the ancientest Rules of the Church, that after all, do rest only upon a human Authority: Those

2 Thess. 3. 14.

1 Cor. 5. 11

1 Cor. 11. 28.

rules

rules concerning ſcandalous perſons, belong to the Body in general; and if there ſhould be Errors and male-Adminiſtrations, the Body, or rather its Paſtors when in a Body, are accountable for that, and not the the Individuals of the Society, who cannot be further concern'd in them, than to lament ſuch defects, and to uſe their beſt endeavours to help them to be redreſſed; ſo this can never juſtify a ſeparation, becauſe there may be erroneous or ſcandalous men in a Society, who are too much connived at.

St. *Paul* finds great fault with many Errors; ſome bad Practices and Scandals among the *Corinthians*; yet tho in one caſe he thunders a ſevere Sentence upon a more eminently ſcandalous man, he never ſo much as inſinuates that the reſt of the body ſhonld ſeparate themſelves from thoſe erroneous or irregular men: On the contrary, he preſſes the Obligations to Unity, moſt vehemently on the *Corinthians*, tho that was the Church which he charged the moſt ſeverely of all others, both with Errors, Diſorders in Worſhip, and ſcandalous Practices.

It was no wonder, If after the Church of *Rome* had enervated the whole Ancient Diſcipline, and had turn'd it all to be a ſecret practice between the Prieſt and the Penitent in Auricular Confeſſion; and that Diſpenſations and Commutations were brought in; by which men know the price of ſin, and how to buy it off, that all of the ſudden this Church could not be brought back to the Primitive Conſtitutions: tho we ſee that our Reformers did ſincerely intend it, and prepared a Model for it. But our bad Circumſtances have made, that this great and good Deſign could never be effected ſince that time; for which we ſtill continue to make a publick Acknowledgment in the Preface to the *Office of Commination*. But after all, How faulty ſoever particular perſons may be in not obeying the Rules of the Church, the Clergy are obliged to Catechiſe the Youth, and when they are duly prepared for it, they ought to offer them to the Biſhop to be *Confirm'd*; and this ought to precede their being at firſt admitted to the Sacrament. If this is not duly and punctually executed, it is the fault of thoſe who fail in their Duty; and one of the beſt and moſt effectual Anſwer that we can make to this prejudice, is to endeavour to do in this point what lies in us, towards the Inſtructing and Confirming the Youth. As for the Scandals of men's lives, much more certainly might be done, both in the way of private admonition, and publick cenſure, than is done; ſo here the beſt anſwer will ſtill return upon us: We ought to do all that is incumbent on us; for watching over thoſe that are committed to our Care, for correcting their Manners, for making the incorrigible aſham'd, and for cutting off corrupt and gangreen'd Members, that they ſpread not their Infection to thoſe that are yet ſound. Yet if another man fail of his Duty, that can never excuſe any one from doing his; and ſo it can never be a juſt ground of ſeparation.

Some except to our habit, as a Ceremony taken from the Service of the Jewiſh Temple: and this, tho it is now eſteem'd the leaſt conſiderable of all the exceptions made againſt us, yet was that which firſt began thoſe unhappy diſputes that have ſince increaſed ſo fatally upon us. The chief thing ſtood upon at firſt, was, That it was a compliance with the Superſtitions of Popery; but that has been conſider'd already; to which I ſhall in this place only add this one Conſideration more to juſtify thoſe Compliances in matters that are in themſelves innocent; That in Fact, the body of this

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Nation was in a very few years brought off from Popery; to which it is highly probable, that those small Compliances contributed not a little; so that the single reason upon which this was at first oppos'd, was the chief Reason for its continuance.

All publick Functions are perform'd in some special Habits; and *White* being among both *Greeks* and *Romans*, the colour that expressed *Joy*, it bearing also a Signification of Purity and Innocence, it was natural for the Primitive Christians, both to put such as were newly baptized in *white*, and also to have Divine Offices perform'd by persons habited in the same manner. It is true, Popery had brought in much Superstition upon all this; the several parcels of the habits were deliver'd with particular Devotions in the conferring of Orders; which imported a peculiar Virtue and Sanctity to be in them, and they were to be us'd with such constant Devotions, that did all signify that a Sacramental Virtue was believ'd to be lodg'd in them. Now all this was taken away by our Reformers; only for the decency of Worship, in compliance with Ancient Practices, they retain'd the Habits themselves; and since the greatest Bodies of those who divide from us, have us'd *Black Gowns*, which is both a peculiar form of a Habit, and in a special Colour, that signifi'd Gravity, it will not be easy to find a good reason, why a peculiar Habit in a Colour that expressed both Innocence and Joy, might not be as well us'd. If we pretended that Innocence is by this convey'd to us, here were a just exception; but we using it only as a decent Habit, that is enjoin'd by Law, it is enough to justify our Obedience, if the thing is lawful; and it is enough to justify the Law, if this Robe was Ancient, and have in it a proper expression of that temper of mind, in which we ought to be, when we go to perform Divine Offices.

And thus it appears on how weak grounds the first disputes concerning Rituals among us were begun; upon the progess of which, and the effects that have followed upon them, one can never reflect without remembring those words of St. *James*, *Behold how great a matter a little fire hath kindled.*

3. Jam. 5. 6. Some have excepted to our observing *Holy-days*, as if this was an Invasion upon that Liberty which the Fourth Commandment gives for *Work*, all *the six days of the Week*; and as if Men pretended to an Authority to make any parcels of time *Holy*. Some quarrel with the days for the honor of the Apostles, as if this was a remnant of Popery: others except even to the observance of *Christmas* and *Ascension-day*, together with those other days that relate to our Saviour himself; as if the observing them were a reproaching the Apostles with want of regard to the *Person of Christ*, which we pretend to supply. But those words of *six days Labour*, are not to be understood as a perpetual Command, otherwise God himself had appointed a violation of this, by all those other days of *Rest* that were enjoined the *Jews*, all which were called *Sabbaths*. Every seventh year was to be one continued *Sabbath*; Therefore the Importance of the 4*th*. Commandment is only this, That when that Precept was first given, God left Mankind free for six days, and only reserved a seventh for Rest and Religion; but that did not limit himself, nor all other Lawful Powers, from making further Impositions for Rest and Religious Exercises. It is also certain, that Men cannot make a *Day Holy* in one sense, that is, affix a special Purity, or particular Virtue to any one day; but the larger sense of a *Holy Day*, being a day dedicated to Religious Exercises, it seems to be in the power of every Society

to

to appoint such Anniversary days, as well as to appoint special times of Fasting and Thanksgiving upon one particular day, and for one turn: for since all do agree, that this may be done for once, the Arguments from the Fourth Commandment, and against appointing a *holy day*, are out of doors; so it remains only to consider, whether Anniversary Days may be appointed.

We see the *Jews*, during the seventy years of the Captivity, observ'd the Fast of the Fourth, the Fifth, the Seventh and Tenth Month; and the Prophet expostulating in the Name of God upon that Head, does neither except to the Imposition, nor the fixing Anniversaries, but only complains of their being ill kept; which plainly imports the acceptance of them, if well kept. The *Jews* also fixed one Anniversary in commemoration of their Deliverance from *Haman*'s wicked designs against them; and another for remembring the Purifying the Temple from its Idolatrious Defilement by *Antiochus Epiphanes*. This last was observed by our Saviour, at least we find him in the Temple on that day. Now can any reason be assign'd; either from the nature of things, or from any special limitations in the Scripture, that should restrain the Power that is naturally in every body of men, for apointing things of this nature? 7. Zech. 5. 8 Zech. 19. 9. Esther 21. 27, 10, John 22.

The commemorating the Dispensation of the Gospel committed to the Apostles, has nothing of the Superstition of Popery in it: No Invocations or Addresses being made to them, and no Sacraments administred for their Honor, or recommended to their Intercession. God is only blessed for those several Dispensations, of which they were made the Channels and Instruments. But we ought rather to be concern'd, That these Commemorations are practic'd in so slight a manner, that we seem much more liable to an Objection upon that account; and tho in the first fervour of Christianity, in which those early Converts lived almost wholly in the Meditations of Christ, and of what related to him, some Institutions of days for more special remembrances of particular Circumstances had not been made, there might have been very good reason for the succeeding Ages to have studied to keep alive that fervour by such appointments of days, for the more solemn Commemoration of such signal Blessings: and tho there were not the same clear warrants from Antiquity for every one of these, yet it was still in the Power of the Church to make such new Orders, as should seem necessary for carrying on the main Design of Religion.

The Ancient Church thought that the whole fifty days between *Easter* and *Pentecost* ought to be kept with a special Solemnity of Rejoycing, for the Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour, and for the Effusion of the Holy Ghost; since some more particular Devotions on those heads, during that whole time, did not break off the labours of their other Employments, nor interrupt the common business of life; upon the same parity of reason they might appoint some time before that season of *Joy*, to be spent in confessing past sins, and mourning for them in higher degrees of *Prayer* and *Fasting*. This being only the prescribing a method for appropriating such Exercises in Devotion to the several seasons of the year, an over-valuing of these things, together with a nice distinction of Meats, was a piece of Superstition which might corrupt that which was good in any Constitution. The distinction of Meats for that season, is among us founded meerly on a Law of the Land, for Civil and Political Ends; since the Church only recommends *Prayer* and *Fasting* in general, witout any further Specialities as to the measure of the Fast; so no just exception

lies to any part of this whole matter, concerning days and times appropriated to particular Exercises. I wish our Practice in these were such, that this part of our Constitution were not too evidently a matter of Form, and observed with too visible a slightness.

And thus I have gone round all that I remember ever to have met with in Books or Discourses from any of the *Dissenters*, except from those call'd *Quakers*, against our Constitution, and have offer'd you those answers, which to me, after the most impartial search that I am capable of, seem full to satisfy 'em all. It remains, That I consider such as are offer'd by those who are called *Quakers*.

1. First, They are against all sorts of stated Forms; their main Principle being, That nothing is to be done by us, by virtue of any outward warrant, unless there is an inward excitation or opening of the Spirit that leads to it: And therefore all fixed Rules being contrary to the freedom of the Spirit, they are against them all. But either this Principle must have some limitation to restrain it, or it will cast open a door to subvert all Religion and Policy; for those inward Excitations being only known to those who have them, every man's word must be taken concerning them. If then a man by affirming that he had, or had not, such or such an excitation, will be thereby justified or excus'd; then he may do, or not do what he will, and the whole Order of Religion, Morality and Civil Society will be thereby dissolv'd: but if they say, that there is that Harmony between the secret leadings of the Spirit and the Scriptures, that whatsoever is commanded in the one, is always witnessed to by the other; then we are to examine this matter by the Scriptures, and to conclude, That if there are rules given in them for the constant use of the Sacraments, then they are hereby condemned who have laid them aside.

Our Saviour encourag'd his Apostles to go and execute the Commission that he gave them, to make Disciples, and *Baptize all Nations*; with this Promise, 28. Mat. 20. *That he was to be with them alway, even to the end of the World.* The promise is given as as an encouragement to the duty enjoin'd; and from hence we may conclude, that the precept of *Baptisme* must continue likewise to the *end of the World.* To this we must join those other words of our Saviour, 3. John 5. *Except a man is born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* which is affirmed without any limitation of time. By *the Kingdom of Heaven* is plainly meant the Dispensation of the Gospel; and since *Baptism* was then practised, and was well understood by them, who were born *Jews*, nothing in reason can be understood by the being *born of Water and of the Spirit*, but the being initiated by *Baptism*, and the being inwardly Sanctified: The one as well as the other, is made indispensably necessary to the being *a member* of this new Dispensation. St *Mark* also has recorded those words of our Saviour: 16. Mark 16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned*: Now since *Baptism* is only enjoined by *Precept*, and is not necessary as a *mean*, but only as an act of Obedience: therefore tho the doing it is commanded in order to *Salvation*, yet *Damnation* is not the consequent of its not being done, since one may be prevented in it by death, or other Impossibilities may put it out of his power to procure Baptism to himself: And therefore, as the one branch of this period shews the obligation laid on us to be baptized in order to *Salvation*, so the leaving it out in the other branch, shews

that

that our not coming within the rites of our Religion, when that failure is no fault of ours, does not exclude us from *Salvation*, or bring us to a ſtate of *Damnation*.

In the beginnings of Chriſtianity, the wonderful effuſion of the *Holy Ghoſt* was thought a true reaſon for baptizing ſuch perſons on whom it fell; and therefore St. *Peter* ſaid, when the *Holy Ghoſt* fell viſibly on *Cornelius* and his Friends, *Can any man forbid water, that thoſe ſhould not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghoſt as well as we?* And with this he ſettled the minds of thoſe who were a little offended at that action. This ſhews that no pretence to *a high diſpenſation of the Spirit*, can evacuate that Precept; ſince, on the contrary, an evidence of the giving the Holy Ghoſt, was pleaded as an Argument for baptizing: Nor does any one paſſage in which Baptiſm is mentioned in the New Teſtament, limit it to that time, and intimate that it belonged only to the beginnings of Chriſtianity, or that it was to determine when it was more fully ſetled: ſo that this, with the conſtant practice of all ſucceeding Ages, without a ſhadow of any Exception, muſt conclude us as to this Point. 10 Act. 47. 11 Act. 17.

Our Saviour did alſo appoint the other Sacrament to be continued *in remembrance of him*; by which St. *Paul* ſays, we *ſhew forth his death till he come.* Now theſe words cannot be underſtood of any ſuppoſed inward and ſpiritual *coming*, ſince the moſt ſignal *coming* in that ſenſe, was the effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt at *Penteceſt*, and yet after that time the Apoſtles continued to practice it, and delivered it to the Churches as a Precept ſtill obligatory, till *Chriſt ſhould come.* If then we ought ſtill to remember him, and *ſhew forth his death*; if it is *the Communion of his Body and Blood*; if it is *the new Covenant in his Blood for the remiſſion of ſins*; then as long as theſe things are Duties incumbent on us, ſo long we muſt be under the obligation of *eating that Bread, and drinking that Cup.* 1 Cor. 11. 26.

Further, If Chriſt has left different Gifts to different Orders of men, *ſome Apoſtles, ſome Prophets, ſome Evangeliſts: and ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, and for edifying the Body of Chriſt, till we come into a perfect man, and are no more in danger of being toſſed to and fro, and carried away with every wind of doctrine.* Theſe words do plainly import, That as long as mankind is under the frailties of this preſent ſtate, and in this confuſed Scene, that ſome of theſe Orders muſt ſtill be continued in the Church, and that thoſe Rules and Preceps given to *Timothy* and *Titus* concerning ſuch as were to be ordained *Biſhops* or *Elders*, that is, *Prieſts* and *Deacons*, were to be laſting and ſtanding Rules; for indeed if the deſign had not been to eſtabliſh that Order for the ſucceeding Ages, there was leſs need of it in that, in which there was ſuch a plentiful Meaſure of the Spirit poured out upon all Chriſtians; that ſuch Functions in that time might have been well ſpared, if it had not been for this, that they were then to be ſetled under the Patronage, if I may ſo ſpeak, of the Apoſtles themſelves, from whom they were to receive an Authority, which how little neceſſary ſoever it might ſeem in that wonderful time, yet was to be more needed in the ſucceeding Ages. 4 Eph. 11, 12, 13, 14. 1 Tim. 3. 1 Tit. 1.

Therefore we may well conclude, That whatſoever was ordered concerning thoſe Offices or Officers of the Church, in the firſt Age, was by a ſtronger parity of reaſon to be continued down through all the Ages of the Church;

and in particular, if in that time in which Women received the Gifts of the
1 Cor. 14. Holy Ghoſt, ſo that ſome propheſied, and others *laboured much in the Lord*,
34, 35. that is in the Goſpel; yet St. *Paul* did in two different Epiſtles, particularly
1 Tim. 2. reſtrain them from teaching or *ſpeaking in the Church*; to which he adds, *That*
11. *it was a ſhame for Women to ſpeak in the Church*; that is, it might turn to be a reproach to the Chriſtian Religion, and furniſh Scoffers with ſome colours of expoſing it to the ſcorn of the Age. This was to be much more ſtrictly obſerved, when all thoſe extraordinary Characters, that might ſeem to be exemptions from common Rules, did no longer continue.

As for thoſe diſtinctions into which they have caſt themſelves, of the *Hat*, and the denying Titles, and ſpeaking in the ſingular *Thou* and *Thee*, it is to be conſidered, That how unfit ſoever it be, and how unbecoming Chriſtians to be conformed to this world, yet it rather leſſens than heightens the great Idea that the world ought to have of the Chriſtian Religion, when it ſtates a diverſity among men about meer Trifles. Our Saviour and his Apoſtles com-
13 Rom. 7. plied as much in all innocent Cuſtoms, as they avoided all ſinful ones. *Honour to whom honour is due*, is a ſtanding Duty; and though the *bowing the Body*, and *falling proſtrate*, are poſtures that ſeem liker Idolatry, and more abject in
2 Sam. 20. their nature than the *Hat*; yet the very Prophets of God paid theſe reſpects to
41. Kings. Outward Actions or Geſtures ſignify only what is entended to be ex-
1 Sam. 24. preſſed, and what is generally underſtood by them; ſo that what is known to
8. be meant only for a piece of Civil reſpect, can never be ſtretched to a Religi-
1 Kings 1. ous reſpect; and though that abject homage under which the *Jewiſh* Rabbies
23. had brought their Diſciples, and which they had expreſt in Titles that imported their profound ſubmiſſion to them, was reproved by our Saviour; yet we ſe-
23 Mat. 8. that the word Κύριε, *Sir*, or *Lord*, was then uſed as commonly as we now
9, 10. do; ſince *Mary Magdalen* called him, whom ſhee took for a Gardener, *Sir*, or
20 John 15. *Lord*. And St. *Paul* gave *Feſtus* the Title which belonged to his Office, it being the ſame that *Claudius Lyſias* gave *Felix*, who certainly was not wanting in that;
26 Acts 25. and that being the Title of men of Rank, St. *Luke* adreſſes both his Books to
23 Acts 26. *Thephilus*, deſigning him in one of them in the ſame manner. Words ſignify
1 Luke 3. nothing of themſelves, as they are meer ſounds, but according to the ſignification in which men agree to uſe them; ſo if the ſpeaking to one man in the plural number, is underſtood only as a more reſpectful way of treating him, then the plural is in this caſe really but a ſingular. Indeed theſe things ſcarce deſerve to be ſo narrowly lookt into.

The Scruple againſt Swearing, is more important both to them and to the
5 Mat. 34. Publick. They have indeed the appearance of a plain Command of our Saviour's
5 Jam 12. againſt all manner of Swearing, which is repeated by St. *James*; but this muſt be reſtricted to their communication, according to the words that follow, ſince we find *Swearing* not only commanded in the Old Teſtament, but
1 Rom. 9. practiſed in the New. The Apoſtles ſwear, at every time they ſay *God is*
1 Theſſ. 2. *witneſs*; and more ſolemnly, *when God is called for a record upon their Soul.* The
10. Angel of God *lifts up his hand, and ſweares by him that lives for ever and ever.*
2 Cor. 1. 23 God ſwears by himſelf, and *an Oath for confirmation*, that is, for affirming any
10 Rev. 5, 6 matter, *is the end of all Controverſy.* We find our Saviour himſelf anſwered
6 Heb. 16. upon Oath, when adjured by the High Prieſt to tell, If he was the Chriſt, the
17, 18. Son of the moſt high God; for according to the Moſaical Law, *when any Soul*
Lev. 7. *ſinned, and heard the voice of Swearing*, that is of Adjuration, *and was a witneſs whe-*

ther he hath ſeen it or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he ſhall bear his Iniquity; that is, he ſhall be guilty of Perjury. It were eaſy to ſhew from ſeveral Paſſages of the Old Teſtament, That Superior, whether Parents or Princes, could put others under a Curſe, and by that either bind them in a Promiſe of Vow, or oblige them to declare the truth. This being then the cuſtom of the *Jews*, our Saviour, though ſilent, as long as it was free to him to ſpeak or not, he in that ſhewing his patience and meekneſs; yet as ſoon as he was adjured, he then anſwered; for he was bound by that Oath to declare the truth: Therefore ſince among the *Jews* the Party did not take the Oath, but was only paſſive to the Judge that impoſed it upon him, thoſe cited words of our Saviour cannot be extended beyond Oaths in communication, that is in common diſcourſe, or the common buſineſs of life: For indeed to end all matters by a ſolemn Appeal to God, is a natural piece of Worſhip and Religious Adoration.

1 Sam. 14. 24, 38, 39. 17. Judg. 2. 26. Mat. 63, 64.

They load us with another prejudice, in which, tho we may ſeem too much parties to it, yet it is not to be paſſed over: They call us *Hirelings* for receiving thoſe ſupports and rewards for our labours that are appropriated to us. Thoſe who run into theſe Imployments only with ſuch views, and deſire to be *put in a Prieſt's Office, that they may eat a piece of bread*, muſt feel ſomewhat within them that teſtifies to the truth of this Imputation: But ſuch as do dedicate themſelves to the Goſpel, and ſerve at the Altar, may well *live of the Altar*, and of the Goſpel, or the reward of the glad tidings that they publiſh; *for ſo*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *hath the Lord ordained*. All perſons will yield it to be lawful to accept the bounty that is freely offered, by private perſons to ſuch as labour among them; ſo it will not be eaſy to ſhew why publik Bodies may not by ſetled Laws give thoſe bounties for ever, as well as particular perſons do it for once. And therefore not to enter upon the diſcuſſion of any antecedent right to *Tythes*, it is certain that Publick Laws may appropriate ſuch proportion of Soil, or of its growth, to ſuch uſes as they think fitting: And when that is once done, private perſons muſt bear that, even when they do not approve of the uſe. Thoſe very people think that all Wars are unlawful, and yet they pay Taxes, tho levied in expreſs words to carry on a War. Thus then, when any proportion of the growth of a Nation is applied to any uſe by a Law, that proportion becomes a rent due to the Publick, in conſideration whereof, there is a full abatement made, as it is bought and ſold: And whoſoever purchaſes with ſuch abatement, can have no right to that for which they paid nothing. Now it is certain, that no man can pretend to poſſeſs himſelf of that which is not his own; on this colour, that he who does then poſſeſs it, has no good Title to it. That man knows that he himſelf has no right to it, whether the Poſſeſſor's Title is good or bad, and that is enough for him not to challenge or invade it: Every man knows that his Tythes are not his, he never bought them; on the contrary, he made a conſiderable diminution of the price that he would have paid, if the Land had been Tythe-free: And therefore this being of the nature of a Quit rent, that the Law has laid on an Eſtate, any opinion that a man may have of the lawfulneſs of the uſe to which it goes, can never juſtify him, who keeps that which is not his own, from the perſon to whom the Law has appropriated it. If therefore theſe men would govern themſelves by the Maxims of ſtrict Juſtice, as long as they cannot overcome this ſcruple, they ought to make no purchaſes, but where they buy out the whole Increaſe of the Soil, and pay its full price: And as there are fair portions over the whole Nation, that are *Tythe-free*, this were a way of dealing that would look like a ſtrictneſs of Conſcience, a regard to their own peace, and the

1 Sam. 2, 36. 1 Cor. 9. 11, 13, 14.

quiet

quiet and peace of the Society; By so doing, they should possess nothing that were not their own, and invade nothing that were any other man's.

Thus, I think, I have omitted no material Objection that is made to the terms of communion among us as to our Worship and Rituals; and I think I have offered sufficient reason, not only to justify the concurrence of all the single Members of our Body in every one of them, but also to justify our Forms and Constitutions in themselves: It is enough to prove that they are *lawful*, to oblige all the Members of the Body or Society to observe them; but the fitness and usefulness of them must also be made out, to justify the Laws and Constitutions that are made concerning them. But tho *lawful* and *unlawful* are severe and rigorous things, and of a fixed and determinate nature; yet *fit* or *unfit* are of a more loose and unstable Order: And in this respect things may have different faces; what is fit in one respect, and at one time, may be much otherwise at other times: And therefore, tho this is not a consideration strong enough to dissolve the Obligation, under which private persons lie to obedience, yet it ought to be well considered by those to whom that care may belong. It is certain, that a long continuanc of any Custom is a very powerful Argument, enforcing any antecedent fitness that might have been at the first setling of such matters: For all Novelties, as they gratify the levity of more inconstant Minds, so they grate no less upon men of more staid tempers; who naturally are not given to change: Yet when all things are well weighed, there may be upon some occasions very good reasons for altering some things, which were at first established upon as good and just Considerations; since there is nothing in any Human Constitution, which comes not from an immediate Divine Authority, that may not be brought under second thoughts, and become the matter of new deliberations.

To conclude, those Divisions from us, and the Prejudices that are raised against us, ought to make us watch the more carefully over our selves, since we have so many severe observers: They ought to oblige us to such an exactness of deportment, and such diligence in our labours, that our behaviour, both in our Persons and Callings, may not inflame and heighten, but on the contrary, very much allay and soften those Prejudices: since after all that is said in the way of Speculation and Argument, the numbers are most wrought on by visible and sensible Prejudices. If we see among those who divide from us, any of the appearances of vertue, in a sober and grave deportment, a modest and humble way of behaviour, a solemn seriousness, the fear of an Oath, a plain simplicity of living, a mutual union and tenderness for one another, and a seeming to be in earnest in the matters of Religion, together with a true strictness in breeding their Youth to understand Religion, and study the Scriptures; let us not deny that which we see to be true, but let us study to bring our selves, and our people, to outdo them in these things: and to add to these, an exact probity and justice, candor and truth, fidelity and integrity, a meek and gentle behaviour, free from rash censuring, and evil speaking, a universal Charity to all Mankind, a readiness to forgive Injuries, to do good for evil, and liberality in our bounty to the necessitous; straitning our selves to relieve others: And if we can bear with them by our charity, as well as the Law tolerates them in their Opinions, we may hope, by the blessing of God, in a competent time to overcome all their Prejudices, and so to heal all our Divisions, and to become of one heart and mind.

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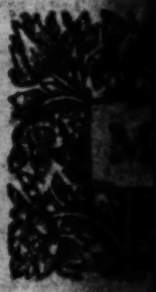

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